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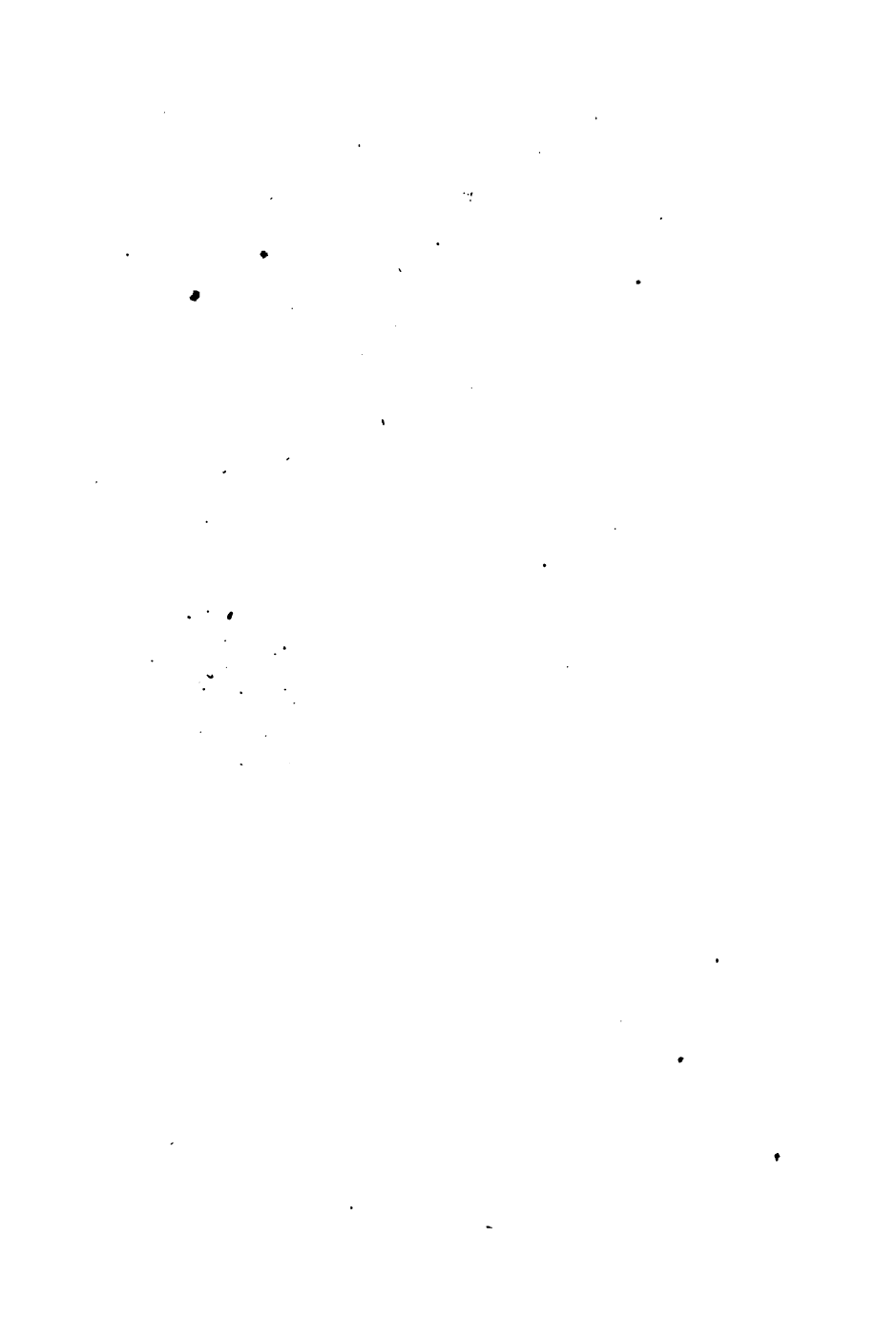
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*TOILING
IN
ROWING.*





"TOILING IN ROWING:"

HALF-HOURS OF EARNEST CONVERSE WITH MY HARD-WORKING FRIENDS.

BY

ONE WHO KNOWS AND LOVES THEM.



"A sacred burden is the life ye bear :
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly ;
Stand up, and walk beneath it steadfastly :
Toll not for sorrow, falter not for sin,
But onward, upward, till the goal ye win.
God guard ye, and God guide ye on your way,
Young pilgrim warriors who set forth to-day."

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"TOILING IN ROWING."

INTRODUCTORY.

THE REASON WHY.

"He lives who lives to God alone,
And all are dead beside ;
For other source than God is none,
Whence life can be supplied."

"There be many that say, Who will show us any good ?"

MOST people, when they sit down to write a book, have some particular object in view. Now mine is to help my friends to an answer to this question,—
"Who will show us any good ?"

Many people have spoken to you, and many have written books for you ; but, I think, no one ever did either with heartier wishes for your real welfare. These have grown out of long years of intercourse, and out of the sorrow I feel to see so many of you "spending your strength for nought, and your labour for that which satisfieth not."

A

Three little words in the description of Christ's disciples in a storm on the Sea of Galilee, often come to my mind when I see people hard at work on unproductive labour, "Toiling in rowing." I fear a great many of us are doing that.

Some years ago when travelling in Scotland, we came to a ferry, which must needs be crossed before we could reach our night's resting-place. We knew nothing of any difficulty. The ferry-man agreed to take us over, and we got at once into the boat which was to take us across the mouth of a broken bay. Presently we began to suspect that we were not getting on so well as might be wished. We watched the man, he was doing his best, rowing hard. But we soon found that we were making no headway, only hugging the shore we had started from. We supposed that in a few minutes he would take the right place to shoot across; but when we had been out long enough to have got over, we ventured to remonstrate. And then he told us there was a tremendous race just there, and that at that particular state of the tide he could hardly hold his own to prevent our being carried out to sea. We felt under the circumstances that the only thing to be done was to put back, and be patient till the tide would allow of our getting safely over. All the man's "toiling in rowing" had been in vain, and his hard work only just sufficed to keep the boat from being drifted into the strong current. By and bye four stout rowers came over from the other side to fetch us, and the difficulty was then soon overcome

with the efficient help of their strong arms and united effort.

There are, and there ever will be, a great many toilers, weary toilers, and I would encourage some of them, if it may be, to give up their fruitless toil, and to receive Christ into their hearts; so that when they grow weary with the constant struggle in "the waves of this troublesome world," they may comfort themselves with the thought, "So He bringeth them unto the desired haven." For do you remember what happened when the disciples were "toiling in rowing, the wind being contrary to them?" Jesus had been watching them. Jesus walked on the water to go to them, and when "*they willingly received him into the ship, immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.*"

"With Christ in the vessel
I'll smile at the storm."

With Christ in the vessel, there need be no more useless "toiling in rowing."

Dear friends, I long to put you in the way of good by leading you to the only Good One, who "daily loadeth us with benefits," who hourly gives us proof of His love "because his compassions fail not," and who "commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

"New every morning is the love,
Our wakening and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought."

I ask you therefore patiently to read, what I shall ask Him to let me say to you; and to believe that the words are dictated by a wish to help you by making you help yourselves, and by a desire to show my sympathy with you in the hard struggle some of you have to maintain in this cold bustling world. There is a terrible fight with poverty and sickness, with temptation, sin, and shame, daily going on; fought out by brave hearts and true, who try to make the best of it; and by desponding ones, who are for giving in, wearily, saying, "It's no use trying against this or that, I shall never be better in myself or my circumstances;" and by defiant ones, whose hand is against every one, setting themselves against God, because they have made themselves believe that He and every one else is against them. All these I fain would help. And there are careless ones who don't seem to fight at all, but drift through their lives, not caring how: and these I want to rouse to action.

I write, because of many that I have known I have had no tidings for years, and yet I still long over my old friends. Sometimes one and another seems forcibly brought to my recollection, and I cannot help but pray for them. The thought comes that perhaps at that particular time they are in circumstances of temptation, difficulty, or danger, and my heart goes out in earnest pleading for them to Him, who "is more ready to hear than we to pray," and who is able and willing to help, whatever the need.

Many and varied have been the occupations of my friends, and in many and diverse localities have I formed friendships ; but what I want to feel is that we are all working for one and the same Master in our different stations, and performing our daily appointed work under His eye, and are all determining to meet in the one Home whence there is no going out ; that, knowing that

“ Toil comes with the morning,
And rest with the night,”

we may cheer ourselves with the thought—

“ Although the day be never so long,
At last it ringeth to even song,”

and may be so working as to be sure of rest at the end of the working day—“ The rest that remaineth for the people of God ”—

“ And nightly pitch our roving tent,
A day’s march nearer home ;”

ever crying out—

“ ’Tis home, ’tis home we long to reach,
He who guides us may choose the way ;
Little we care what path he takes,
If nearer home each day.”

You are not forgotten by me, my friends, and often I think I should like to know whether this one or that one is still on earth ; whether this name may be still pleaded in prayer, or must be left out because the time for prayer is over ; for when man has gone “ to his long home,” there may be no more

prayer for him, "for as the tree falleth so it must lie." And this makes me so anxious about some that I have known. Where are they? How are they living? For God, or still for themselves? which, alas, means that they are Satan's slaves. I long to know whether they have found the blessedness of feeling safe for time and safe for eternity, of having God for their reconciled Father, instead of their stern judge; whether they can echo those bright words spoken by one of themselves, "It's the happiest life for a man to live for God, if there were no heaven." Methinks there is a joyous ring about them which might well make others inquire what causes it.

I want my words to reach you. I please myself while writing, with the thought that possibly this may fall into the hands of this one and that one, who have long passed out of my sight, out of the sound of my voice, and may recall to their minds words spoken, or books lent; the little quiet talk by the wayside, or the earnest converse and short readings in the huts, of so many years ago, that they are well-nigh forgotten till these homely words bring them back again. For printed words may catch the eye, when spoken words fail to reach the ear, and many a message has gone home to the heart from a little book taken up *carelessly* to while away a few spare minutes, or *wearily* to beguile the languor of enforced idleness, by reason of sickness or accident.

It grieves me to think how far some that I know

have wandered from the right way. I can only pray for them, entreating that the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep, will rescue these wanderers upon the mountains of error; that He who says "Behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out" (Ezek. xxxiv. 11, &c.), will in His love "deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day," that they may not be a prey to the "roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour." Our Lord tells us in parable that He goeth "after that which is lost *until he find it*," so I trust that very soon may be heard the cry, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep, seek thy servant."

I believe I am rather inclined to fly off at a tangent, and write or say what comes into my head at the moment, so I fear my reflections may appear somewhat discursive; but you must bear with me.

Have you ever had a favourite flower—a shrub or fruit tree perhaps, if you live in the country and have your bit of garden—but a flower, a window-sill flower, if you live in the town? You watch it and care for it, you water it and tend it, and for a time it seems to reward your care. Its leaves are firm and well coloured, its blossoms forming well, even the first bud or two opening out to make you rejoice in the promise of what will, by and bye, be its beauty. But while you watch, it dwines, and dwindles, and languishes, its leaves hang limp; the promise is gone, it would seem to be dying! You are bitterly disappointed, and what is the cause?

There is a worm at the root draining the soil of its nourishment, or some blight has come upon it. Will it revive again? You loosen the soil, if need be you transplant it; you carefully wash off the blight, and pick away the dead leaves. You water it afresh, you put it in the sun; perhaps it may reward your care.

And this to me is a parable. So have I watched some of my friends turning over a new leaf, as they call it. The promise was very fair, evil habits were broken through, and good resolutions appeared to be strengthening in the performance of duty. "By their fruits ye shall know them," said our Lord. Even thus I hoped they were going to bring forth some fruit to His praise, when there was a halt in the progress; the fair promise seemed blighted. *And what the cause?* Some sudden assault of Satan—some want of watchfulness and prayer—some hidden sin or bad habit asserting its power again—a dependence on self perhaps, thinking that all the work was done—as if because the buds are forming well we count the fruit that is to be, forgetful that before it comes to perfection, it will be subject to nipping frost, cold biting winds, and the attacks of insects.

And even as with my parable flower, we do not give up hope because disappointed, but try to revive its drooping head; so in these cases would we watch and warn, and if possible remove them from their circumstances of danger, taking them *out of the way of temptation*. We would beseech

the Holy Spirit to water them with the dew of blessing; we would *put them in the sun*, entreating that the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness may shine on them with revivifying power, crying out, "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known."

When any say to me, "I can keep myself," I know there is great cause for fear for them, that the leaves of their profession will wither, and that they will bring no fruit to perfection. But when any seem trusting alone to the strength that is in Christ Jesus, then I have hope; and though Satan may be permitted for a time to seem to be getting the victory, I know that that word is true; "They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

One I knew who rejoiced my heart by the manifest change in his life. God's house, long neglected, was regularly attended twice on the Sunday; and a pleasant sight it was on the Sunday evening to see the whole family party, the young wife carrying her infant, and he leading by the hand a little toddling child, as we met on our way to church. God's word was now studied, and its truths seemed sinking into his heart. One day I came upon him leaning on a railing buried in thought; he lifted his head as I passed, to make me rejoice for him by his few earnest words. The exact words have passed from my memory, as it is years since, but the impression they left has remained; that he was truly sorry for his past life of

carelessness and sin, and looking alone to the Lord Jesus for pardon, and strength, and peace.

I left home shortly after, and when I returned my friend was gone. Once I heard of him—"Oh yes, he was very religious, and allowed no swearing in the hut," which was so far comforting. Since then I have failed to trace him; but when I once again asked one likely to know him, if I might hope for a good report, my question was left unanswered, which made me fear lest the leaves of that fair profession had withered away.

Another there is, whom I have watched from time to time, as the chances of his work brought him into the neighbourhood, with hope and fear. There was much of promise, quenched continually by sad relapses, and every now and then, a terrible "break out." He retained in his memory passages of Scripture taught him by his mother in early youth, and constantly referred to the parable of the prodigal son, as suitable for himself.

At last after a sad time, it seemed that the time for God to have mercy on him had come. He made a promise and kept it; and to my joy I saw him arise and shake himself from his old ways, bad habits, and evil companions. So humbly did he walk with his God, so earnest was he in studying and listening to God's word, and in prayer; so bright and happy was he apparently in his new way of life, so distrustful of himself, that I could not but hope that for him indeed old things had passed away, and thank God and take courage concerning

him. I found I could trust him, and I hoped that he was daily increasing in the knowledge and love of God, and in strength to resist temptation, as time went on and there was no sign of halting. As far as man could judge he seemed pressing into the kingdom of heaven.

But one day, to my surprise and grief, I was told he had suddenly left, no one knew why. I thought that the old spirit of roving had irresistibly possessed him, and my mind was filled with anxious forebodings, while many prayers followed him. Days passed on, when fear was changed to sorrowful certainty by his own sad confession, that being led into temptation, he had grievously fallen by giving way to the drink. In his intense sorrow for sin, I saw the striving of God's Holy Spirit, and was thankful that he could not rest till he had come back to his God. Prayer seemed his only resource, as he entreated that it might be made for him. I was sorely cast down about him. Sadly did his words ring in my ear, rousing me to continued prayer for him, "I thought I was in the right way, and now I don't know where I am."

The fair promise was indeed blighted. "An enemy hath done this,"—trampled the life well-nigh out of the poor plant that seemed growing so well; *the* enemy of souls, making a furious onslaught, intent to uproot the work of grace and fill the heart again with noisome weeds. I marvelled at this fall, but I saw that it was to bring forth some good, when I heard one of his friends say, "It has

been a lesson to me, to be very watchful." And there in sadness I must leave him, for he passed again out of my sight, but even as I write, I am hoping this may fall into his hands, and tell him that I still plead for him, that because our God is long-suffering, very pitiful, and of great mercy, I still hope for him.

Since writing this, I have heard how it was that he failed. The word stands ever true, "Be sure your sin will find you out," and the only way to avoid that, is to find it out, and confess it right humbly to God. For if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall find mercy; but whoso covereth his sins, shall not prosper." It may be that my poor friend was covering a sin, hiding it away in his heart, that he had not brought it to the light, that he might see it, as God sees even the least sin. It may be that he was hoping it might not be mentioned to him again to trouble him, now that he was trying to do so differently, and that God therefore brought it to his remembrance in a way which obliged him to look it in the face. Satan is very wise in the way in which he ensnares unwary souls, and it may be that God allowed him to test this one by casting up to it an old score, and he got a sore advantage, and for the time, at least, succeeded in pushing this weak one down. True it is that "conscience doth make cowards of us all." Instead of running to God, he feared; he acted on Adam's speech, "I was afraid,

and hid myself," and he fled away from God (that is, he tried to), and from those who would have warned, and counselled, and befriended him, putting him in the right way to get through the trouble, so that acquiescing in God's justice, he might yet have trusted His love. But the blow came before he was strong enough to meet bravely the fear of punishment, and the consequences of an old sin. And now my fear is lest Satan may keep him from coming back, by making him believe that he is far too bad to think of forgiveness, happiness, and heaven; that he will keep him from listening to God, and trying to do better, by taunts that, as he has sinned against light and knowledge, there is no hope for him now.

But is it so? There was hope for David when he said, "I have sinned against the Lord." "I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." And then, though he had aggravated his fault by sinning presumptuously, and keeping aloof from God for long weary months,—then the words of pardon and peace fell on his ear, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." For "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profiteth me not, he will deliver his soul from going down into the pit." *Therefore I will still hope for my poor friend.*

And have not these sad experiences a word for us? Are they not a comment on the words, "Let

him that thinketh he standeth *take heed*, lest he fall?" Do they not show us the need of constant watchfulness and earnest prayer, that we may have grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow the only God?—our only safe attitude being in utter self-distrust, waiting on Him who says, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help," for "I have laid help upon one that is mighty." Well may we cry out, "O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always, nor even for one moment, stand upright, grant to us such strength and protection, as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations. Thou seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; and because, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, do Thou, with Thy great might, succour us, and with thy bountiful grace and mercy, speedily help and deliver us, for Jesus Christ's sake.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." There is a comfort in these words, sad note of warning though they strike.

"*Seem* to come short." There is the comfort. The *seeming* is bad enough, but the actual *coming short* is far worse. It is sad that any should slip back, but there is a difference between slipping back against our will, and *drawing back*, deliberately turning "the back, and not the face," upon God, as He says, the face that should be set Zionwards. There is a difference between *falling* and *falling away*; and if we feel our danger, we know our safety too, when we are taught to cry, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "*Seem to come short.*" The word has been forgotten, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it;" and the first false step taken, Satan persuades to worse. He tempts us to think that it is of no use to return, and so we may as well go on in our waywardness. He tries hard to get us to say, "There is no hope; no, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go," (Jer. ii. 25); and if he can bind any one with that terrible chain of hopelessness, driving them to recklessness, theirs is indeed a sad case, needing the same exercise of grace, delivering power, and pardoning mercy as at the first. Then indeed do the "feet stick fast in deep mire." *Seem*—because the best runner may meet with a stumble or a fall, and seem to lose his chance of winning the race: and "a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again," therefore we may say, "Rejoice

not against me, O mine enemy ; when I fall, I shall arise ; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me."

We know that everything needs testing. We test our bodily strength, our powers of endurance, our strength of character. The goldsmith tests the ore brought to him ; the jeweller tests precious stones ; engines, bridges, ropes, chains, all are tested to prove their purity, reality, perfectness, strength, freedom from flaw or imperfection, ability to bear a strain. It is only natural, then, that we should undergo a testing process. "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer."

God does not make temptation, but He allows it. "No man may say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man : but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed ;" but if He sees us trusting ourselves, or walking in vain confidence, He may deal with us as He did with Hezekiah, the good king of Judah. If you turn to his history written for us in the books of Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah, you will see that the character given of him is very good. "He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following Him." He set the house and service of God in order : he set before the people a good example and exhorted them to seek the Lord. An invading army brought sorrow to the land ; sickness

laid him low; but in these troubles he stood firm, referring all to God. But when the test came which was the one suited to his case, he failed. "For his heart was lifted up," and "in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, *God left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.*"

As different substances require different tests, and different ways of using the test; as the chemist employs various tests to detect the presence of differing poisons, some of which are so subtle as almost to elude detection; as the goldsmith uses various means to discover the kind and quantity of alloy mixed with the pure metal; so does our God subject us to the very test which shall bring out our true character. He is intimately acquainted with us, and He uses for each of us, just that test which shall show the measure of our strength and weakness, and which shall detect the hidden poison of sin injected by Satan; which, if undetected, unexpunged, shall surely work our destruction. With Hezekiah it was the test of prosperity; with Job that of adversity. With David, Peter, and others, there was the direct assault of Satan in the terrible temptation to sin, which taught them such bitter lessons of their own weakness, and gave such sad occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme,—lessons which had to be learnt with tears, of "godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of."

Temptation is not sin, but the yielding to it is. Temptation is a putting to the proof: "it is not sin in the heart, but sin presented to the mind, and if we do not consent, we are sinless in the midst of sin, in spite of the temptation." So, tempted soul, be not discouraged overmuch that temptations seem to come thick and strong, "though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations." "Ye have need of patience," and by and bye your faith, which is "much more precious than gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire," having endured the trial, shall "be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Do not say in a burst of faint-hearted impatience, "All these things are against me." I cannot stand by reason of these onslaughts of Satan;—but remember, "Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last," and say with Job, "He knoweth the way that I take, when he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold." "Fear not, thy Redeemer is strong, is mighty; the Lord of Hosts is his name."

Far as we may wander from our God, He is tenderly solicitous about us, and ever ready to welcome our return. Could more loving entreaties be spoken, than by our God? "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?" "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings," nay more, I will love them freely." Therefore "from the ends of the earth" may we cry,

when the "heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I." "Out of the depths" of misery, and shame, and wretchedness, battling with, and fearing to sink beneath the surging waves of temptation and doubt—"out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord," "Lord, hear my cry," "Lord, save, or I perish;" and the cry is heard. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself." Nay more, if the cry be choked with sobs so as to be inaudible by man, or broken into groans, He hears. "I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice, hide not thine ear at *my breathing*, at my cry. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee, thou saidst, Fear not." "Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my *groaning* is not hid from thee." "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation," is the cry of the sorrowful soul. "I have seen his ways and will heal him. I will lead him also and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners," is the answer of a gracious God. "When he was yet a great way off, the Father saw him."

Far as we may wander, the eye of God is upon us. David *knew* this when he wrote the 139th Psalm, and said, "Thou understandest my thought afar off." "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" He *felt* it when Nathan's words, "Thou art the man," broke down his disguises, and brought his sin to his remembrance. Hagar knew it when in the solitary wilderness God spake to her by name, and "she called

the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me; for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" The conviction was forced in upon Elijah's heart, when his faith and courage having given way after the strain put upon them, "he arose and went for his life," and being in the wilderness, requested that he might die, as Jezebel had threatened his life. But a table was there prepared for him, and again a second time he was bidden by an angel to recruit his wasted strength. God was watching him, caring for him still. And by and bye came the twice repeated question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Jonah felt it when he fled from the presence of the Lord, and found that even in the uttermost parts of the sea it was true, "Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Yes, we may wander far, but never can it be said, "The Lord doth not see, neither doth the God of Jacob regard." The gentle loving look of pity, which, in breaking Peter's heart, must have recalled to his ears the accents of reproach in the tone of the question, "Simon, sleepest thou?" with the tender excuse made for the weary disciples, "the flesh is weak," and the warning which ought to have braced him to resistance: that same loving look is on us, and will surely win us back again.

"Him have I pierced, I come, oh, I come!
Oh, let me never wander more,
One only look brought Peter back of yore;
How bitterly I weep, as then he wept,
Henceforth, oh, keep me, and I shall be kept."

“If thou, Lord, shouldest” be extreme to “mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared:” not that we may sin more because grace abounds, but that we may hate sin more, and fear more than ever to offend one so ready to forgive. In our utter weakness, then, let us look up to our Father with the prayer of Jabez (1 Chron. iv. 10), “Oh, that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and that thou wouldest keep me from the evil, that it may not grieve me!” and as we daily prove our weakness, pray with more hearty earnestness, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;” nor ever think to meet temptation in our own strength, but lean more simply on “Him who is able to keep us from falling,” heeding His own word, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

O Lord, Thou knowest all the snares
That round our pathway be,
Thou know'st that both our joys and cares
Come between us and Thee;
Thou know'st that our infirmity
In Thee alone is strong,
To Thee for help and strength we fly;
O let us not go wrong!

O bear us up, protect us now
In dark temptation's hour;
For Thou wert born of woman, Thou
Hast felt the tempter's power:
All sinless, Thou canst feel for those
Who strive and suffer long;
But O, midst all our cares and woes,
Still let us not go wrong.

I seem to have wandered away from my parable plant, but it has another word for some of us. If we watch so carefully those whom we love—the little ones, or those who by God's Providence are brought under our influence—and if we are disappointed if we do not meet with some sort of return for our kindness, how do we stand convicted when we think of God's care for us! We expect to be rewarded by seeing growth in intelligence, aptitude for learning, diligence in study or in work, careful walking, improvement in conduct, in those we are caring for, and are ready to think our labour lost, and that we will waste no more time on such worthless subjects, if they do not repay our trouble. What then can we say as to the return we make for the love lavished upon us, shown in such tender solicitude?

Listen to His lament in the fifth chapter of Isaiah, and say, is it applicable to us as well as to the Jews? Every possible care bestowed on the vine—as He says in another place too, “I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day”—and with what result? “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” Do you remember the parable of the barren fig tree? (Luke xiii. 6, &c.)—how the owner of the vineyard came seeking some return for his outlay, *fruit*; it was only what he had a right to expect, *leaves* would not satisfy him after the care and pains bestowed; no wonder that his sentence

was, "Cut it down ; why cumbereth it the ground ?" when after three years seeking, he still found none. "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Is He so glorified in us ? "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance." Don't pride yourselves on being brought up in Christian England ; don't make excuses of any kind, which the devil likes so to frame for us ; don't draw near to God with the lip only, while the heart is far from Him ; liking to hear or read the Bible, but not caring to order your conduct by it, when its precepts go against your way of life ; as John the Baptist exhorted his hearers, "Begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our father." "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Oh, that the pleading of Him who "ever liveth to make intercession for us," may be heard on behalf of the fruitless ones, who as yet are making no return to the heavenly Husbandman, "Let it alone this year also," if so they may prove that, "the Lord is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish," and, "that the goodness of God leadeth to repentance."

"Return ! return !
From all thy crooked ways ;
Jesus will save the lost,
The fallen He can raise.
Look to Him, who beckons thee,
From the cross so lovingly ;
See His gracious arms extended,
Fear not to seek shelter there,
Where no grief is unbefriended,
Where no sinner need despair.

“Return ! Return !
To thy long-suffering Lord ;
Fear not to trust His grace,
To trust His faithful word.
Yield to Him thy weary heart ;
He can heal its keenest smart,
He can soothe the deepest sorrow,
Wash the blackest guilt away ;
Then delay not till to-morrow,
Seek His offered gifts to-day.”

I.

PETRIFACTIONS.

MY friends, how is it that we see some of you, one while listening attentively to God's word—even as I have seen some with the tears in their eyes, as if God's Spirit was pleading with their heart and they were going to heed His whisper—and the next while we hear the hollow laugh, and see the careless look, and find you unconcerned as ever. Like the writing on the sand, washed out by the advancing tide, the impression we thought was made is gone, and not a trace of it seems to remain. I know that under the careless, light-hearted, off-hand manner there are tender hearts; that this putting off is often just assumed to hide deep feeling. Touches of a better, a noble nature, often gleam out, and make me long to see what you might be, noble, true-hearted, happy servants of the Great King. Oh! if you would only let yourselves think, you careless ones that I know. Oh! if you would only tear off the outer skin of indifference, and let the Bible words penetrate to probe, and so really to heal. 15

you would only heed the word, "It is time to seek the Lord," and would "break up your fallow ground," and let the word sown rest long enough to sink in and take hold of the ground of your heart. Do not let it be any longer true of you, "Then cometh the wicked one (immediately), and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the wayside."

There is a sad word in a parable, which, alas, is only too applicable now-a-days, "They made light of it," (Matt. xxii. 5). We should have thought an invitation to a marriage feast would have been most gladly accepted, but it came to people pre-occupied, and so taken up with their daily business that they cared not to take any trouble in preparation. When the announcement was made that all things were ready, "they made light of it;" thinking scorn of the feast, and of the Master of the feast—going one to his farm, and another to his merchandise—fit picture of those whose hearts are set on the world, who profess that they have no time to attend to heavenly things. Alas! alas! there are too many who treat the Gospel offers as beneath their notice; they turn from them with indifference, "judging themselves unworthy of everlasting life;" they make light of the love of God, of the grace of Christ, of the work of the Spirit. Oh, but "if open sin slays its thousands, indifference slays its tens of thousands." How shall we rouse you up from your indifference and make you think? It is Satan, your worst enemy, who lulls you and persuades you there

is time enough yet, and you are too busy to stop and think about "the things which make for peace." He does not want you to think. He likes to fill our hearts full,—of sin, it may be ; or of our lawful occupations, it may be ; or of honourable endeavour to get on in the world and improve ourselves in learning ; no matter what it is, it will answer his purpose, if it takes all our thoughts.

This pre-occupation of mind is shown also in the parable related by Luke, (xiv. 6, &c.) When the summons came to these invited guests, "they all with one consent began to make excuse." The piece of ground was bought, and must be inspected ; the oxen were bought, and must be proved, therefore the reply was, "I pray thee have me excused ;" and another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come," instead of asking leave to take her with him. None of these things being wrong in themselves, but wrong inasmuch as they were put in their wrong place, and preferred before the acceptance of the invitation ; for lawful occupations become unlawful if they keep back our hearts from God, and right things become wrong by the way in which we do them. Satan likes well to hear these excuses ; God's word is, "Seek first the kingdom of God," but if Satan can make us put off he is nearly sure of us. "I cannot come ;" "ever behind the *cannot* is hidden the *will not*, it is the will that is in fault ;" as our Lord sadly laments, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

THE HIDDEN GUEST.

"And they made light of it."—Matt. xxii. 1-14.

Ye are slighting the King's command,
Despising His servants' call !
Has He spread the feast with His royal hand,
And ye care not to come at all !

Are you going your wilful ways,
Shall nothing your heart alarm ;
Ah ! me, 'tis a pitiful crop you'll raise,
Poor slaves of the mart and farm.

Dare ye tarry till 'tis too late !
The feast must be largely shared ;—
Oh, hasten ye in at the narrow gate,
The banquet is all prepared.

The return of the Bridegroom is near,
The trumpet will shortly sound ;
The voice of His coming ye soon shall hear,
Where, where will ye then be found !

Oh, come as a wedding guest,
Poor desolate child of sin ;
Go quickly, ye servants, and call the rest,
Compel them to enter in !

Their robe shall be pure and fair,
In the blood of the Lamb made white ;
The sinner, the outcast, is welcomed there,
Arrayed in that vesture bright.

Through the highways and hedges go,
Why linger or lag behind ?
Bring in, for the will of the Lord ye know,
As many as ye shall find.

Take the message to small and great,
The feast must be largely shared ;
A *little* delay and 'twill be *too late*,
The banquet is all prepared.

Do you remember, in the appalling story of God's punishment on aggravated sin at Sodom and Gomorrah, two expressions which may well make us think ? God, who "delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked, for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with their unlawful deeds," was also willing to save others with him if they were willing to be saved. He is "not willing that any should perish," so the question was put to Lot, "Hast thou here any besides ? bring them out of this place." But when Lot went forth to urge flight on his sons-in-law, what response did he meet ? All his earnest entreaties proved unavailing. He might as well talk to the winds as waste his words in trying to rouse these careless ones ! "*But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law.*" And, dear friends, is not your spirit too often like that of the men of Sodom, in refusing to heed the note of warning ?

Too many do I know, careless and light hearted, Felix-like in their procrastinating spirit—they do not mean to go to hell, they hope not—they mean to be better some day, they hope to get to heaven somehow. But if truth is pressed home upon them, if they are entreated to pause, to give but an hour out of the week to the consideration of holy things,

of things that are of such infinite importance, the unseen realities of eternity ; if one beseeches them to be reconciled to God, to give Him His due, at least on His own day—they are ready to say, “Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee ;” they turn on their heel, with a “Not-to-day” excuse on their lips. *Alas !* the words have a terrible sound to me. I seem to hear in them the knell of the soul, for God says, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

“Satan labours to put off the sinner with delays—the command saith, Now repent. The imperative hath no future tense. God saith, To-day, while it is to-day. The devil saith, To-morrow ; which wilt thou obey, God or him ? Thou sayest thou meanest at last to do it ; then why not now ? Wilt thou stand with God for a day or two, haggle with Him for a penny ? Heaven is not such a hard penny-worth, but that thou mayest come up to His terms ; and which is the morrow thou meanest ? Thou hast but a day in thy life for ought thou knowest, where then canst thou find a morrow for repentance ?”

There was enough of conscience in Felix to make him tremble as Paul “reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come,” (and there is enough of conscience in you to make you shift about uneasily for an excuse) : but there was enough of indecision, of fatal self-will and self-delusion, to make him deliberately put by the consideration and

wait for "a more convenient season," which, alas! we fear never came to him. Oh, that hoodwinking spirit of procrastination! Putting off—putting off—which robs us of time present; which steals from us opportunities which may never be ours again. What time is *really* more convenient than the present? "*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation."

With many the case stands thus. They do not object to be reasoned with, in fact they quite go with the truth of what is urged. They do not doubt the blessedness of peace with God, the happiness of a sober temperate life, the certainty of judgment to come, and the awfulness of being found wanting in the qualifications for heaven: but—I grow heart sick and weary constantly at hearing, "Yes, I know it's all right as you say; but——"

There is some fatal hindrance to the attention being given *now*; the decisive step being taken *now*; and but too surely "the street of By-and-by leads to the gate of Never." "Hell is paved with good resolutions," said one. "Few are in hell but thought of repenting, but Satan so handled the matter that they never could pitch upon the time in earnest when to do it." Very, very few dare God all their lives without some compunction, some trembling; but alas! for the putting by; not now—to-morrow—next Sunday—next year——. "I'll close it some day," a man used to promise of his shop on the Lord's day, but he died before he put his resolution in practice! "I mean to turn over a new leaf."

But each time we refuse to act up to our words it is a harder effort than ever to rouse ourselves to action. It is hard to break through any habit that we have let grow strong ; and we need God's help after we have made good resolutions, "to bring the same to good effect." I recollect hearing a clergyman tell of one whose heart was touched by God's love. His outward life testified to the change that had passed over him, and he was desirous in all things to honour God. But there was one point where his courage failed. He felt he ought to acknowledge and honour God before his family, by assembling them around him for family prayer, but it was something so new and so hard to him that he kept putting it off. The right time never seemed to come, because he listened to a fearful heart, and at last he died suddenly without having done so. In his pocket was found a book of family prayer, which he had evidently carried about with him intending daily to summon courage to use, for it was worn out literally, not with use, but with hope, the clergyman said ; a sad record of indecision of purpose. The only chance for us (as we say) "is to strike while the iron is hot."

"Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep ;" yet a little sleep, and a little slumber, and a little folding of the hands to sleep, "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise and call upon thy God," for the awakening will be sad enough, unless the lethargy be shaken off before the messenger Death overtakes the sleeper. "He that being often reproved hardeneth

his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."

There is a terrible disease going on in some physical frames, called ossification of the heart; gradually, painlessly, surely, the hardening process progresses, till, at last, the heart ceases to beat. And this is unfortunately not confined to our physical heart, but in too many is the hardening process going on, "the conscience seared as with a hot iron," "the ears dull of hearing, the heart waxed gross," "the eyes closed so that they cannot see, or hear, or understand with their heart." "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be *hardened* through the deceitfulness of sin." Every warning despised, every invitation refused, leaves us in a worse condition than before—more callous and cold. Therefore, we sometimes tremble to speak with you on holy things, lest you, being "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hear the voice of the charmer charming never so wisely," knowing what is right and doing what is wrong, should thereby increase your condemnation.

In the affairs of this life, we think it wise to get well beforehand, to make provision for the future, to arrange our plans, so that we may be ready for what may happen. How is it, then, that we are so careless as to the future for our souls? Is it wise to delay preparation for death, which must certainly

come, and the life after death ? Nay, rather, is it not the height of folly to leave our souls and our eternal destinies to take care of themselves, as too many do ! The word to us all is, "Ye know not what shall be upon the morrow." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." And how often is this word forced upon our consideration by some accident or sudden death, which shows us more plainly than ever the uncertainty of life.

How many of you go forth to your work, knowing that it is a chance, as you say, whether you will not meet your death before the time for going home, whether the summons may not come to you to lay aside your tools from the Master in heaven, even though the task assigned you by the earthly master is not accomplished. You know that a slip on your part, or on that of your mates, the loosening of a timber, a fall of earth, the disarrangement of a trifling piece of machinery, would do it at any moment. You go with your lives in your hand, "in deaths oft," and yet, *how* do you go ? Often have I shuddered to see men start off for a dangerous piece of work anything but sober, and have marvelled, indeed, at their rashness. It has been said to me, "If I were to stop to think about this, I should be afraid." Nay, verily, I want to give you the spring of true courage, to make you know of something that will always keep your courage up, and make you strong to do and dare any work required of you : the feeling of safety under any

circumstances,—being safely hidden under the shadow of the Almighty, upheld by a Father's hand, working under a Father's eye, being able to say, "To me to live is Christ, to die is gain." "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is *safe*," safe for time, safe for eternity: "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Are we not safe under such guardianship? are we not safe and happy if we can say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him (soul and body) against that day."

"My heart grows strong, all terrors fly,
Whene'er I feel Thy love, Most High,
Doth compass me around."

And—

"He who God for His hath taken,
'Mid the changing world, unshaken
Keeps a free heroic heart."

One I knew, so genial and hearty, so ready to listen and to make others listen, I was ever hoping the word might "profit them that heard it." The work on which he was engaged being nearly finished, he was obliged to remove with his family; but, in taking leave of me, he said, "I shall not say good-bye, I shall often be over and see you." It was Sunday evening, and I begged him to spend his last Sunday evening well by going to church. He

could not, he said, he must go round to his friends. He took a card of prayer, promising to use it. We had a long earnest talk, it seemed as if I could hardly let him go until I knew that he would give himself to the Lord without reserve, and without further delay. In three weeks, I was quite broken down by the news of his death. He had gone forth on a Monday morning, cheerily as usual, to his work, but he was never to return alive. Engaged in sinking a well, the foul air generated on the Sunday overpowered him and a mate, as they incautiously descended into it. "Thou takest away their breath, they die." What had become of my friend's resolutions? Was he *safe*? The card of prayer was in his pocket, and sure I am that, if he had pleaded it heartily, he would have been heard; but all I could do was to beseech God for those that were left,—awe-struck for the moment,—that they might heed the warning; entreating that I might be roused to more diligence in seizing opportunities of telling them of God's great love, and by all means trying to win souls to Him.

The man who told me of the accident was very fond of him who was gone, and I begged him to let the message go down into his heart. Many messages he had had. In a severe illness in the preceding winter, he had said if he rose from that sick bed, his life should be so different. God raised him up, and his life was different for a time, but in time of temptation his good resolutions had withered away, having no root. He now promised that no-

thing should prevent him from being at a reading held on the Sunday afternoon, and I felt he *must* keep his word. But God had another message for him, and on the Sunday he was lying in the hospital with a broken leg. He has since passed out of my sight, and I know not whether he has yet given himself to God.

You know cases like these, and can you wonder that we, who have been taught of God to realise the importance of securing this great salvation, should most anxiously press on you the fatal error of careless indifference, and beseech you again and again to flee for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before you?

Just now, in reminding you of the story of Lot's deliverance from Sodom, I said there were two expressions which demanded our thought. I want you to lay them to heart. Don't you be among those who think scorn of the good news, and of the earnest endeavour to rouse them to a sense of their position. Don't let it be written down as true of those who warn you, "*He seemed as one that mocked unto them,*" for these are not "idle tales," these are not "cunningly-devised fables," but "words of soberness and truth." And then, notice the tenderness of our God depicted in the words, "While he lingered, the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters, *the Lord being merciful unto him.*" That is the second expression I want you to ponder over. What long-suffering is here! Lot lingering, though

he knew swift destruction was on the wing! But the Lord had compassion on the weakness of His child, and "being merciful unto him," urged his laggard steps. And yet, of that little band in whose ears were ringing the warning words, "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, nor stay in all the plain," one failed, and remained a standing memorial of mercy despised and warning rejected. Lot's wife looked behind her, and became a pillar of salt.

Some of you have seen petrified substances: frogs, pieces of wood, birds' nests, eggs, moss, &c. &c. subjected to the action of a particular kind of water which has coated them, or impregnated them, so that they are petrified—turned to stone—retaining their original shape, but cold to the touch; just in fact a piece of stone, in shape like those things. One drop of water after another, just the perpetual drip, drip, has done it. And the action of sin on our hearts is to petrify them, to reduce them to this stony condition: "they refused to hearken and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made *their hearts as an adamant stone*, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent." (Zech. vii. 11, 12).

Perhaps some of you may have explored some of the wonderful caverns where the perpetual drip of water impregnated with lime, has produced stalactites, which in the lapse of time have grown into splendid pillars, or ornaments, assuming all sorts of

fantastic shapes. One such magnificent cavern I have read of, very large, with long winding passages branching in all directions, making it unsafe to venture to explore it without a guide. The entrance to this cavern was lost, owing to a fall of earth, for some two hundred years, and when discovered again, there indeed was a "sermon in stones" for the workmen who happened on it. Close by the entrance was the petrified skeleton of a man. It was supposed that he had gone in without a guide; that he had wandered about vainly trying to find the way to the mouth of the cavern, and at last, utterly exhausted with fruitless effort, he had lain down to die just short of safety. And then the drip, drip of the water had done the rest, and written in stone, as it petrified the bones, that it is a fearful thing to be within sight and reach of safety, and yet just to miss it. That poor man must have wished that he had taken a guide, when he found himself wandering among the intricacies of those winding ways. And what was the beauty of the cave to him then? he could only have longed to find the right way out when, too late, he discovered the fatal error he had committed. The Bible speaks of "the pleasures of sin," but it adds they "are but for a season:" and when the bitter thought, "too late," forces itself upon the mind of one who, without one thought of the future, has been enjoying (?) the years as they fled by, the beauty will then be turned to ashes, the pleasure into pain in the retrospect. ~~And what~~

must have been the glory of Sodom, and all its pleasures and gaieties to Lot's wife, when, in turning disobediently to look behind her, she felt the life-blood freeze in her veins, as she caught sight of the end of it all, in that awful storm of fire and brimstone rained down from heaven! She was within reach of safety and yet missed it. She holds a danger signal in her hand on which we read our Lord's words, "Remember Lot's wife." See what a terrible thing it is just to come short of safety. And what will it be for you, if with all the warnings you have had, and all your good resolutions, you yet let the hardening effects of sin tell so on you, that you remain immovable when others are fleeing from the city of Destruction, so that at last you find yourselves outside Heaven, and hear the terrible words, "Depart from me," because you let that word stand true for you, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

In passing, I will mention two Bible petrifications for you to think over. In the history of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who refused to let the children of Israel go from his land, we have an instance of a heart gradually hardening itself against God in spite of warnings and judgments, till the awful words are recorded, "And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart." And the end of that proud rebellion was utter destruction from the presence of the Lord. "They sank as lead in the mighty waters. They sank to the bottom as a stone." The description of Nabal, the very churlish man who refused to do a kindness

to David, and "railed on" his young men, shows him to have been a petrification. We read, "And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken; but, when the wine was gone out of Nabal, and his wife told him" how nearly they had all been severely punished for his unkindness, "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone, and about ten days after the Lord smote Nabal that he died."

"If a man die, shall he live again?" Could all Lot's most strenuous efforts avail to move his wife when turned into the pillar of salt? We cannot turn petrifications back to their original substance; we cannot wake the dead to life. We cannot rouse petrified souls to make them feel. But we do not despair, for there is One who can; and though the heart is a stony heart here is a blessed counteraction, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh, and I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes."—(Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) There are "waters" which "wear the stones," as well as those which possess the property of petrifying. We mark the little basins in the hard rock, that the raindrops have hollowed out for themselves in the long course of years. We see the deep channel cut through the rugged rocks by the ceaseless action of a stream. And so we trust it may be now; that the rugged spirit of obstinacy, of perversely going against God

and choosing our own way, may be worn down, that the Holy Spirit may trace a channel through our hearts, and this be seen in all our lives, He making our hearts soft, and our way perfect, and inclining us to put away the frowardness, and to yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, "*the Lord being merciful unto*" us. For these few words are the record of mercy for every saved soul. And have they been written for you, or do you mean that they shall be? If the Lord had not been merciful unto you, would you not long ago have received "the due reward of your deeds?" But in wrath He remembers mercy, and He has yet given you space to repent.

"Then haste, sinner, haste, there is mercy for thee,
And wrath is preparing, flee, lingerer, flee."

"God calling yet! and shall I never hearken,
But still earth's witcheries my spirit darken?
This passing life, these passing joys, all flying,
And still my soul in dreamy slumbers lying.

"God calling yet! and I not yet arising,
So long His loving faithful voice despising;
So falsely His unwearied care repaying,
He calls me still, and still I am delaying!

"God calling yet! loud at my heart is knocking,
And I my heart, my ear still firmer locking,
He still is ready, willing to receive me,
Is waiting now, but ah! He soon may leave me!"

II.

TREASURE-TROVE.

“I will love Thee,—all my treasure !
I will love Thee,—all my strength !
I will love Thee,—without measure,
And will love Thee right at length.”

OH, if you would believe it, religion is such a happy thing. “O sinners, did you but know, which you cannot till you come over to Christ and embrace Him as your Lord and Saviour, what the privileges of Christ’s servants are, and what gentle usage saints have at Christ’s hands, you would say those were the only happy men in the world which stand continually before Him.”

When you see a man happy in very adverse circumstances, you naturally begin to inquire what is the reason of his bearing up so well. Shall I tell you of one who has “passed from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?” It was a chance word did it, but that word was spoken by a lover of souls, and dictated and directed by the Spirit of God. Trouble came upon him soon after,

short work, no work for weeks in the winter. Sickness came to his home, and soon one of his little ones was not, "for God took him." But through all my friend could say, with a beaming face that verified his words, "I have never known what it is to be happy till now. I am sometimes so happy I could formerly not have believed it possible." Shall I tell you of another of whom this one spoke to me, saying, "When you work with a man you see the stuff he's made of; there's no mistake about him, he is changed, indeed. He does live for God." And the bright, earnest, humble look, the drinking in God's word, the attention to God's day, the grief at sin in others, the watchfulness against yielding in himself, the evident change in his whole appearance; all this proves that his mate is right. There is no mistake about it. He has found the secret of true happiness, and I always think of him as one who can truly say, as a brave working man said, "I've made my choice for God, and He makes me so happy in it." Will you not try it too?

I met him one day when he was in what you would call a peck of troubles, and I had no power to help him out of them; I could only sympathise and hope for brighter days. It had pleased God to put him to the proof in many ways in his circumstances and home, and as I met him I thought his look rather downcast. I did not wonder. He had many anxious subjects for thought, many problems to work out, and then patiently to wait till they righted themselves, or till God showed him what to

do next. Years before, I knew he would have flown to the drink for comfort, but he has learnt a better source of comfort since he can say—

“The Saviour cannot pass away,
And with Him lives our joy.”

“My God for me, I dare to say,
God the portion of my soul !
Nor need I tremble in dismay
When around me troubles roll,
If you ask, ‘what comforts thee ?’
It is this—God is for me !

“In life, in death, with God so near,
Every battle I shall win ;
Shall boldly press through dangers here,
Triumph over every sin ;
‘What !’ you say, ‘a victor be ?’
No, not I, but God in me.”

I said, “Your troubles don’t make you doubt your Father’s love?” There came a gleam of light across his face as he lifted his head to answer, with unfaltering voice, “Oh ! no, indeed, I know it is all for the best.” And I could rejoice for him as I reminded him, “Tribulation worketh patience ;” Now no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby.” So does the love of Christ fill the heart that longs for Him with a “peace that passeth understanding.” As a poor African widow exclaimed, “God does not forsake me. He cares for me, and looks after me. Bitter troubles ! true—but they won’t drive me from Him. I fasten my faith

upon Him, and have not even the smallest doubt that He will ever forget or forsake me. What is the friendship of the world but enmity with God." Happy those who can say—

"In heavenly love abiding
No change my heart shall fear,
And safe is such confiding,
For nothing changes here.—

"My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free,
My Saviour has my treasure,
And He will walk with me."

Religion elevates a man, it must do so. The sense of sin forgiven, its guilt removed, its dominion broken, the shame all gone; this gives an elasticity and lightness to the spirit, which was before time crushed and grovelling in the dust. And still more the thought of what we are, and what we are tending to, will raise and animate us with joyful hope and new aspirations. Children of God, heirs of heaven, citizens of no mean city, but of the heavenly Jerusalem,—“for our citizenship is in heaven,”—no longer in bondage, but the Lord’s freemen, walking in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free, made one with Christ, “complete in Him;”—the sense of all this may well lift us out of ourselves, and raise us above any painful or trying circumstances in our lot—

“And happy still in all distress
The child that to his father flies,
The heart that on its God relies
For strength and holiness.”

“He that sinneth wrongeth his own soul.” “As righteousness tendeth to life, so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death.” It is the very lowest ground to put it on, but *self-interest* itself might well prompt an inquiry into religion. “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” Many, many times does God appeal to this feeling when he adds to a command, “that it may be well with thee.” “Behold I have taught you statutes and judgment. Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.” “And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is this day. And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us.” “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea!” Passages like these are to be met with throughout the Bible; with countless

instances of those, who, having made the Lord their trust, were by Him prospered in the thing to which they set their hand. Of Jehoshaphat, king of Israel it is written, "And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he sought to the Lord God, and walked in his commandments, therefore the Lord established the kingdom in his hand." Of Hezekiah, king of Judah, we read, "He clave to the Lord and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments which the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went." Read the history of Joseph, who is described as a "prosperous man," "because the Lord was with him, and that which he did, the Lord made it to prosper," whether as a slave in the house of the wealthy Egyptian, or left to pine in the prison (because a tender conscience made him brave to resist temptation to sin, saying, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?") till God's time came for lifting him up and giving him favour in the sight of the king. Blessed indeed are the people "that know the joyful sound," "yea, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it;" well may they try to make others understand their happiness, saying, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good, for we are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you." "Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus," who says, "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." We are not yet come thither, it is true, and the road may be some-

what rough here and there, but if it is, we are provided for it in the promise, "Your shoes shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." There may be difficulties before us, but for all that, "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace," and our Father gives us, as a pilgrim staff, the sure word to rest on, "He led them forth by the right way that they might go to a city of habitation."

"I say to all men far and near,
That Christ is risen again,
That He is with us now and here,
And ever shall remain.

"And what I say let each this morn
Go tell it to his friend,
That soon in every place shall dawn,
His kingdom without end.

"Now first to souls who thus awake,
Seems heaven a fatherland,
A new and endless life they take,
With rapture from His hand."

"Come then and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten." "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country," but if we are not thirsty we pass by the cold waters, and if we have no friends in the far country or no reason to draw out our interest towards it, we do not care for the news. But in truth the cold waters are for our refreshment,

and if the poor souls but knew the gift of God, which they refuse and forsake, committing "two evils" in forsaking "the fountain of living waters," and hewing out for themselves "cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," (Jer. ii. 13); if they knew, they would cry out, "Give me this water that I thirst not," for, saith the Lord Jesus, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The invitation goes forth, "Ho, every one that thirsteth come ye to the waters." But too many prefer to slake their thirst, if possible, at some rill of their own finding, and not until this has been proved impossible—as the streams of earth are all brackish, and unsatisfying, if not actually poisoned—does the cry break forth "My soul thirsteth for God," which is immediately responded to, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the water of life freely." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit."

We know that water has many uses, many properties, and it is constantly referred to in the Bible, for one or other of the lessons to be learned from its various uses. You have noticed perhaps in a ramble among the mountains, a little thread of emerald green running along the side of the hill, or winding through the valley. There is no need to tell you that it is occasioned by a little runnel from the hill

above, tracking itself in the fresher green of the grass and ferns by which it passes. You have rested awhile when weary with a mountain climb, or perchance by a hard day's work, and the very babble and tinkle of a brook as it makes music over the stones, has brought a feeling of refreshment, which you may increase by bathing your hot brow in its cool waters. And if the weary souls but knew the cordial and refreshment of "the cold flowing waters that come from another place" than this poor earth, they would surely pause in their headlong haste, to rest awhile beside them.

I never knew the refreshment of simply pausing by "the cold flowing waters," till one day when we were enjoying the loveliness of a Swiss valley, but overpowered by the intense heat of a glowing summer sun. It was a picture not soon to be effaced from the photograph book of memory, and ever the thought would come—

If such the beauty of a sin-marred earth,
What will its renovated glory be ?
If such the footstool, what must be the Throne ?

as we gazed on the different features of the scene, —the cloudless blue sky, so intense in its depth of colour, that it seemed to take us up into space, yea, even into the very heaven itself, and we almost thought to catch a glimpse of that city of which "the first foundation was jasper, and the second sapphire;" of that "paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were, the body of heaven in its clearness;"

and almost thought to see with the prophet Ezekiel, "as it were, a sapphire stone as the appearance of a throne," till the eye grew wearied, and almost longed for "a little cloud," if no bigger than "a man's hand," to break the unvarying depth of azure, which was too perfect for an imperfect eye to bear. And then the glory of those snow-clad mountain-peaks, cutting the clear blue sky! Their dazzling beauty made us marvel more than ever at the expression, "whiter than snow," and reminded us of those "white and glistening garments, exceeding white as snow, as no fuller on earth can white them," and carried away the thought to the purity of Him "who dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto." And then the valley itself was lovely, with its carpet of ferns, and the fresh green beauty everywhere. But the road was very rough, in many places so narrow that we could only go in single file. And the miles seemed very long, even on our willing horses, who made nothing of bits so steep and rugged, that it seemed to us like going up and down stairs. The end of the excursion was a beautiful fall; a volume of water thundering down two hundred feet in a narrow broken gorge, throwing up clouds of spray, which, catching the light, were turned into so many rainbows. But long before we reached this, I was worn out with the heat and longing for rest; then ever as we crossed and recrossed a stream in its windings, there was a sense of relief. Flowing down from the glacier above, far off among the mountains, the sea of ice and snow at the head of the valley, "the

cold flowing waters" brought with them an icy chill, very pleasantly invigorating to our weariness, as we gladly paused on the little wooden bridges.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God," whose waters flowing forth, "go softly," but produce much effect, greatly enriching the lands through which it flows. (Ps. lxxv. 9.) "And it shall come to pass that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the river shall come, shall live: because these waters shall come thither; for they shall be healed: and every thing shall live whither the river cometh." "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord; and he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." And these know the truth of the word, and can exult in it, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

"Thou of life the fountain art
Freely let me take of thee,
Spring thou up within my heart,
Rise to all eternity."

But there are some who dwell within sight and sound of the stream of truth, and yet get no benefit from it. "But the miry places thereof and the marshes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt." In these days of open Bibles, and Sunday schools, few know not the outlines of "the old, old story," few there are who know not the

facts of the life of Jesus: but this is not enough. What good does the knowledge do them? What influence has it upon their lives? It is a terrible thing to be living in the midst of privileges and yet not living up to them; to be living in a Christian land, called by a Christian name, and yet not to be Christians, not to love Christ. It is a sad thing to have the refreshing, life-giving stream, sweep close by with no healing in it for us!

And indeed, "the good news from a far country," should excite our interest, for it does most intimately concern us. There are gathering "the spirits of just men made perfect," redeemed from every kingdom under heaven; and there should our hopes be centred. The "good tidings of great joy" brought down from heaven to earth, are intended to lift our thoughts heavenward to our home; they tell us the way is opened for us; they set out the glories of the land to which we are journeying—of which the descriptions of the earthly Canaan are but the faintest type—where "the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of" the city lightened by the glory of God and of the Lamb, where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain," for "there shall be no more curse," there being no more sin: where "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face."

"We have not reached the land,
That happy land as yet,
Where holy angels round Thee stand,
Whose sun can never set."

But we are longing to reach it, we are "looking for and hasting unto the day of God," we would live as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth," declaring "plainly that we seek a country" and "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly;" and we know that by and bye we shall be satisfied with the full meaning of the word, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty : they shall behold the land that is very far off."

"Heavenward doth our journey tend,
We are strangers here on earth,
Through the wilderness we wend
Towards the Canaan of our birth,
Here we roam a pilgrim band,
Yonder is our native land.

"Heavenward ! Heavenward ! only this
Is my watchword here on earth ;
For the love of heavenly bliss
Counting all things little worth.
Heavenward all my being tends,
Till in heaven my journey ends."

"Set your affection then on things above, and not on things on the earth," "for the things which are seen are temporal," and "the fashion of this world passeth away," "but the things which are not seen are eternal." "And when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

Will you not search and see for yourselves, like the noble Bereans of old (Acts xvii. 11), whether these things are so ? Do not be content to say, in a listless way, "Yes, I daresay, I know you mean

well; I know all about it," but act as you would if some stirring piece of news was brought you; as if some one told you of a lucky chance, or a wonderful piece of good fortune, likely to fall in to your neighbour, and why not to yourself? You would be anxious to know more, and would rouse up to find out the truth. Oh, but if you would only be half as energetic about religion as you are about this world's concerns! Oh, but if you would only determine to put yourself in possession of the real facts of the case, and their bearing on you, you would be a great deal wiser than you are, and a great deal happier! But—Satan is very fond of "*buts*," and I daresay he will make you say, "It is all very well for the rich who have plenty of time, but we have to work too hard to have time for these things."

A man once said to me, "God can't expect it of me, I have to be in the brickfield at dawn, and stay there till dark, I have no time to be religious, or to pray and read the Bible. And Sunday, too, I have things to see after. God must overlook it. It is all very well for those who have not got to work like slaves; you have time, you must pray for me."

My friends, is it quite true that you have no time? Do you not think David must have had a hard busy life of it? Caring for his father's sheep in early youth. There you will say he might have found time for thought, and so he did; but you will remember he had to be always on the watch

lest the sheep should wander, or be devoured by wild beasts. Many weary seekings of lost sheep he doubtless had, which would recur to his mind when he thought of his own sad wanderings, and wrote, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep—seek thy servant;" and many times in after life doubtless would he revive his courage and strengthen his faith by the recollection of his encounter with the savage beasts, saying, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me." Taken from the sheep-folds to the king's court, and to an active life; fighting his way through the years till, in God's time, he came to be king over the people, his thoughts must have been much occupied; yet he says, "Seven times a-day do I praise thee." "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray." I was glad when they said unto me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord." "For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." "I will meditate in thy precepts." And for this He *made* time. "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in Thy word."

Do you not think Daniel must have been a busy man? Raised high in the king's favour, made president over the hundred and twenty princes, whom it pleased Darius the king to set over his mighty kingdom, the demands on his time and thought must have been great, yet he found time to pray. "He kneeled upon his knees three times a-day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God."

Surely the Roman centurion, Cornelius, must have had enough to occupy him; yet of him we read that he was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." The great German reformer, Luther, was surely a busy man engaged in a great work, yet he could not get on with his work, he tells us, without so many hours a-day for prayer, and his experience is that of the many; the more work, the more prayer. I was struck lately by reading words of rebuke spoken by an Indian to one who complained of having no time. "Time, I suppose you have all there is." "Where there is a will, there is a way," in this matter as in all others. We don't care to make time by redeeming it from sleep, or pleasure, or idleness. We forget here, too, the "power of littles," and should be shocked indeed if we sat down to calculate how many hours, nay, perhaps, years, in our lives we have wasted, if only by thinking, such a few minutes as we have on hand, it is not worth troubling to do anything in them. Alas! for the time spent in doing nothing, or in gossiping; alas! for the time spent at the idle corner, propping up the public-house door; to say nothing of the time consumed in the public-house itself.

If we but resolutely determined to redeem time, we should find, however busy we might be, that we ever have enough for the work God would have us do; but the true reason is plain and sad enough, the will is wanting: "They have no heart for it,"

therefore no effort is made. What think you of him who said, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart," (Jer. xv. 16); or of Job, who said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," (xxiii. 12). Which of us so esteem our Bibles? Which of us can say, "Oh, how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." "How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Which of us can set our seal to the Psalmist's experience, (Ps. xix. 7-11), "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward." Did you think there was treasure hidden in your field, you would surely be at some pains to discover it, nor grudge the time and labour it cost you to search for it. And here to your hand is a treasure, a priceless treasure, but you will take no pains to "seek for wisdom as for silver, and search for her as for hid treasure." If you would only make the necessary exertion, and determine to spare a few minutes daily for the

diligent study of God's Word, I think you would soon be heard echoing David's words (Ps. cxix. 162, 111), "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil." "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart."

In old troublous times letters were sometimes written so as to have two meanings. If the letter fell into a chance hand it read as an ordinary straightforward letter; but to the person for whom it was intended it conveyed a far different and hidden meaning, to which a secret in his possession gave him the clue. Again, letters were sometimes written with two inks or chemical preparations. An apparently every-day letter written in ordinary ink might be received. Knowing that important news was to be communicated, the receiver would use the test agreed on, when a hitherto invisible writing would make itself seen, altering completely the sense of that which first met the eye and giving him the information he needed. I think it is even so with our Bibles. To the careless indifferent reader they say one thing; the eye runs lightly over the page, reading the words indeed, but unwitting and unheeding any particular meaning to be attached to them; but far otherwise is it with one in earnest to know God's mind and will; to such an one they are full of hidden deeper meaning which makes itself felt to reward their patient study. Touched by the Holy Spirit's light, the words stand out with fresh meaning, truths are revealed that the

ordinary reader wots not of, and cares not to know, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

I have just met with a striking illustration of this in the life of a great and good man, Cæsar Malan. He had been ordained a minister of the Church at Geneva, but with no love in his heart for the Lord Jesus. He says of himself—"At the time of my ordination I was in utter ignorance of the truth as it is in Jesus." His life was one of strict morality, and upon this he founded his hopes of acceptance with God. His son records that though a minister he loved not the Bible, which "was to him a sealed book. Happening to be travelling on one occasion, and having nothing to occupy him, he tried to read a chapter or two as a species of distraction. But he found the style so old-fashioned, he declares, and the language so common-place, that he put the book aside." But after he had been ordained about five or six years came what he called "the year of deliverance," when he "attained to the faith of salvation by grace." It pleased God to teach him by the power of the Holy Spirit, and then see the difference in his appreciation of the Bible. "One evening," he writes, "we had been reading the fifth chapter of Romans. I was greatly impressed by the whole of it, particularly the 10th verse, 'For in that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.'"

Again, "I turned to Eph. ii., when I came to the words, 'By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,' *the passage seemed to shine out before my eyes.* I was so deeply moved by it that I walked up and down exclaiming with the intensest feeling, 'I am saved, I am saved!'"

Well may we beseech the teaching and guidance of the Holy Spirit, saying, "That which I see not teach Thou me," "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," and come in a teachable spirit to sit at the feet of Jesus, to learn His word. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and He will show them his covenant." "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

When people say they have no time for prayer, it is because they don't understand what prayer is; the lifting up of the eye to Jesus, the lifting up of the heart to God, the breathing of the soul.

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Utter'd or unexpress'd;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast."

It needs not necessarily that we must go away and leave our work in the midst, but over and beyond the stated time for prayer, we may live in

such a spirit of prayer as Paul meant when he said, "Pray without ceasing," making every duty, every action even, every circumstance, the occasion for prayer, crying out as a child to its father, just when the pressing need comes, or the danger threatens. In the busiest time, in the most crowded place we may be alone with our God, as the little sailor boy knew, who in the midst of an engagement got his courage up by "five minutes alone with my God in the crown of my cap."

Do you ever pray? I don't ask if you say your prayers. I have sometimes been shocked at hearing a drunkard] or careless liver say, "Oh yes, I never miss a night but I say my prayers;" it generally follows "in bed" must be added; while I have been equally saddened by being told, "No, I have not knelt down to pray since I was a child, or since I left home." But do you know what *true prayer* is? what it is to hold such communion with God as Moses did when we are told "the Lord spake unto Moses, as a man speaketh unto his friend?" You cannot know this until taught by the Holy Spirit to look up to God reconciled to us in Christ Jesus.

The Pharisees' long prayers at the corners of the streets in old times were not true prayers. (I do not mean to say that none of the Pharisees prayed heartily, or were accepted; but our Lord warns His disciples against the hypocrisy and mistakes which too often marked the outward observance of religion in His day.) Of the outwardly scrupulously

religious Saul of Tarsus, we find it recorded that the first *real* prayer he made was when alone in the darkness, of those three days of blindness following the shining of that great light from heaven, which prostrated him on his way to Damascus. Out of that light the soul-searching and soul-subduing words had reached his ear, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest;" and doubtless as a result those days would be spent in communing with his own heart and with his God, such as he had never known before. According to the rules of "the most straitest sect of religion in which he lived, a Pharisee," he would have made many long prayers, but not till then do we hear God's verdict, "Behold, he prayeth."

There are many Pharisees now most strict in attention to outward religion, while of them it is written, "This people draweth nigh unto me with their lips, while their heart is far from me." And the Pharisaic spirit is not confined to them, but is in the hearts of many who make not the slightest profession of religion; and is in all our hearts when we pride ourselves on being better than our neighbours, and say in our heart, if not in words, "Stand by, for I am holier than thou." But God does not count that as prayer which is offered in such a spirit, and before the prayer of the proud Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men," He prefers to hear the few simple words of the publican, coming from a broken and contrite heart,

"God be merciful to me a sinner," (Luke xviii. 10-14.)

Again, I ask, Do you know what prayer is? Have you ever gone as a child to its father and told your God all your troubles, all your difficulties, all your wants for body and soul, for time and for eternity? Did you ever prove the truth of that word, "Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me," (Isa. xxvii. 5.) Have you ever taken hold of God's strength, have you ever laid firm hold of the Lord Jesus, by whom alone we can find peace with God? Do you doubt whether God will hear you when you come pleading His all-prevailing name? The words, "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent," may assure us when we read, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you," and yet stronger words, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Did you ever ask God for anything with a determination to get it, because you have His promise to hear and answer prayer, and to give you all good things? He says, "Prove me now herewith, if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it," (Mal. iii. 10.) Did you ever so *prove* God? Did you ever take Him at His word and plead, saying, "Do as thou hast said?" Do you know anything of the earnestness and im-

portunity of prayer which will not be denied ; of that wrestling with God which says, " I will not let thee go except thou bless me ?"—Then never tell me God won't answer, won't give you what you want. St. James tells us a reason why our prayers are not answered (iv. 2, 3), " Ye have not, because ye ask not ; ye ask and receive not, *because ye ask amiss.*" Do you remember learning the little child's hymn—

" I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray ;
Or do the wishes of my heart
Go with the words I say !"

Is it not too true that our prayers sadly often go out of " feigned lips " and " faulty hearts ?"

God promises to give what He sees we need, what He thinks best for us ; there is no want to the souls of them that fear Him ; unconditionally He gives every good and perfect gift for our soul's health and prosperity, but He reserves to Himself to choose the way in which He will give, the time when He gives, and the temporal gifts He bestows. We must not dictate to Him. Perhaps the things you have asked for are not the things which will do you good. Do we give a little one that which it clamours for when we know it will do it harm ? When it begs for the bright, beautiful-looking poison berries, when it entreats to run into what we know to be danger, when it clutches at the candle, do we accede to its requests ? Nay, verily ; so must we remember that we are but as children, and our God is a wise Father, therefore we must not be impatient or think He hears not if

we do not get exactly the answer we expect and wish for. When a child is too young to understand our refusal of its requests, when it begins to reach out for the flashing steel, or to cry for what it is impossible to give it, we gently withdraw its attention, and substitute some harmless thing for the wished-for object. Even so, I think, does our God deal with us, saying, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And when we have learnt what true prayer is, taught by the Spirit who helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, we must ever remember to say, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things."

"*Ye ask amiss.*" The disciples were wise, then, when they came with the request to their Master "Lord, teach us to pray." Too often our prayers are like that one of St. Augustine's—"O Lord, convert me, but not yet." If we knew our own deceitful hearts we should often find there was a reservation in our prayers. We think we are honest in putting ourselves and circumstances into God's hands, but we are really keeping something back, and, while we do this, we cannot expect a blessing. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;" therefore, we may well pray, "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy

Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Then, again, we must live up to our prayers. If we tell God of a difficulty or a temptation, we must be careful of ourselves in it—just as we pick our way along a dangerous path, walking warily—"Watching unto prayer." "Set a double guard on that point to-night," was an officer's command when an attack was expected. "Pray to God, and keep your powder dry," was an old General's advice to his men, and this we must do in the battle of life. "Prayer and pains," as the good missionary found, will accomplish anything and everything; but separate the watching, and the working, and the praying, one from the other, and there is a failure, if not a defeat.

"Only, O Lord, in thy dear love,
Fit us for perfect rest above,
And teach us this and every day
To live more nearly as we pray."

III.

INFLUENCE.

“Remember every man God made
Is different, has some deed to do,
Some work to work. Be undismayed
Though time be humble, do it too.”

So many of you drift through your lives caring for no one, and trying to persuade yourselves that no one cares for you, and that it does not matter to any one how you go on, or what you do with yourself or your money. You have no settled purpose in life, only just working because you must supply the needs of the body, saying, in effect, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.” You have cast aside the thought of home and mother-love, at least as to any responsibility you have in the matter; and so you get on as well as you can. And a desolate, dreary, aimless life you have of it, if you let yourselves stop to think about it.

There are men who have made *themselves* the one object in life; they have stood aloof from their fellows, sometimes even cutting themselves off from

family ties in pride and self-sufficiency ; they refuse all sympathy, and pursue the way they have marked out for themselves of self-interest, of aggrandisement, of making themselves a name *alone*, no matter where it leads them or through what. But they are not happy. No, we are too much bound up with one another, there is too much of the family feeling about us (the instinct of better things, the yearnings after a heavenly home, though we do not recognise this perhaps), to let us be happy by ourselves and of ourselves. We are very intimately connected, and in separating one from his fellows we, as it were, lop off a branch from a flourishing tree, which might have been a fruitful branch, nourished by the sap of the parent stem, but now lies useless and withering, even though (as we see in nature) sometimes putting forth a few new green leaves, only to perish with the effort. We may try to persuade ourselves that we are one by ourselves, and that it does not matter to others how we go on ; but it will not do ; we must awake to the falseness of the notion.

The different ranks of society are necessary the one to the other. Long ago, God himself said the poor should never perish out of the land, and He ordained rulers and kings, and by His inspired servants has given us rules for the maintenance of order, requiring that "every soul" should be "subject unto the higher powers," fearing God and honouring the king. "He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, and hath made of one blood

all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times appointed and the bounds of their habitation."

We cannot do without you, my friends, and you cannot do without us. We cannot do without you to build our houses, our churches, our ships, to make our railways, to drive our engines and our ploughs, and you cannot do without us to pay you for these works. You give your labour, which we are glad to take, and in return for it give you our money. We give our thought and sympathy, and you, at any rate sometimes, are glad to take it. And ever is the principle of reciprocity being acted upon; we do not get through a day without giving and taking, and this in things far more serious and important than simple money and labour. We act on each other for time and eternity; consciously or unconsciously, we are ever giving out and taking in to and from one another.

You think it can't matter what you and I do. I'll tell you what a barber said to me one day. He was rather lamenting the *necessity* of keeping his shop open on Sunday. Of course I did not see the *necessity*, but I sympathised nevertheless. He said he must do so, because other barbers kept theirs open, and he should never be able to get on against them if he did not. It was Saturday, late afternoon. He pointed over to the public-house—full—to the idle corner where a number of men were talking over the affairs of the week and the nation. "Now," he said, "if they would only come in to

my shop instead of idling or worse there, I should be able to keep Sunday; but they won't give up the few minutes on the Saturday afternoon when I have nothing to do, they will come in on Sunday morning which is my busiest time, so there's no Sunday for me." I know some working men who signed eagerly petitions against opening museums and places of amusement on Sunday, "because," they said, "every one ought to have their Sunday, and it was a shame to take it from the men who would be required to attend at such places." I wish they would think of such as my barber friend. It would be a very simple thing to spare the few minutes on Saturday afternoon to take the stone out of his way.

When I spoke to a butcher once about keeping his shop open on Sunday morning he regretted it much, but said it could not possibly be helped, other butchers kept theirs open, and people would go to them. "Ah, well," said his wife, "we shall soon have a law about it, and then every one will have to shut up." So they are waiting for an earthly law to strengthen God's law; and, in the meantime, they are trying to throw off the responsibility on to others.

So you see it does matter very much that we each recognise the fact that we are not in this world by ourselves and for ourselves, but each as one of a vast family, the interests of which we must study and forward as much as possible. And as in a family the rebellious, disobedient, headstrong

member of it occasions pain and discomfort, and brings shame often on the whole family; so in the great family of mankind one cannot do wrong without occasioning grief to those who know, or are trying to do, better. One cannot harbour sinful thoughts which shall break out into the indulgence of passion, theft, murders, and all the terrible crimes which are so rife, without bringing shame and sorrow to the rest of the family, and sending those who love God to their knees in earnest pleading, "How long, Lord? when shall it once be that all know Thee as their God and Father, reconciled in Christ Jesus," and strive in all things to live "as sons of God, blameless," "followers of God as dear children."

And it is because I cannot bear to see you living as if you cared for nobody, and nobody cared for you, that I have spoken to you, and that I plead with you. I want to show you that some care for you. And though your animadversions against the rich may sometimes seem to have some truth in them when you are left without work, or in pining sickness, to care for yourselves, and get on as best you may, (it is not always so, you know that), I want you to cover those thoughts with this, *the care of God for His creatures*. "Doth God take care for oxen?" is a Bible question; and if He cares for the beast of the field will He not care for you? He who "feeds the young ravens when they cry," without whose knowledge "not a sparrow falleth to the ground," will He not have more care for the

creatures He made in His own image and likeness? Oh, if I could only persuade you "He careth for you!" *Careth* to supply your bodily wants; *careth* to be grieved when you fling away from Him in waywardness and sin. Alone, lonely enough you may seem sometimes; friendless, and careless of friends, but His eye is upon you; a loving, scrutinising glance. "He is not far from every one of us." "His eyes behold, His eyelids try the children of men." "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro on the earth to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." We are never left to fight the battle of life alone, only when sin separates us from God, and we determine to fight it out by ourselves, sometimes God lets us, to show us our weakness, and make us ready to run back to Him, that we may learn "greater" and "stronger is He that is for you, than all that are against you."

I said just now that we are very intimately connected, bound up together, as members of one family. "Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?" Sad is it that God has to say, "If I be a Father, where is mine honour?" But let us think a little of our relative duties, as it is impossible for us to live separate lives. "Am I my brother's keeper?" is a question first uttered defiantly when the angry Cain had slain his brother Abel, forgetting that his blood would cry out from the ground. It is a question that has sunk down into many a heart, and occasioned anxious thought,

and roused to greater watchfulness and earnest endeavour. It rings in our ears when we are saddened by some story of wrong; and our hearts reproach us with it, if we have lost an opportunity of doing a kindness, or of warning a careless one. "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." And this question and rule are not written only for the rich as to their conduct towards the poor, but for each one of us to one another. The feeling that we belong to one another, and all to God, is a very helpful restraining one. We see it often unconsciously acted upon. Even those who set public opinion at defiance are yet often thinking, What will the world say? Or deep down in the heart is the hope that some one friend, whose opinion is after all valued in some sort, may not hear of this and think shame of it; and many, who determine to sin, are nevertheless afraid of being seen, and choose the night for their deeds of darkness. We lift a finger, or give a warning glance, and a loving, well-trained child will be restrained from disobedience, and will endeavour to curb the rising passion; so we may help one another by gentle reminder, or timely warning. "Warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men."

"Come gladly let us onward
Hand in hand still go,
Each helping one another
Through all the way below,"

and each one singly, and all collectively, look up

to the God and Father of us all for the fulfilment of His promise, "I will guide thee with mine eye."

"Then draw we nearer day by day,
Each to his brethren, all to God."

Every one of us is sent into this world for a purpose; we have each our place to fill and our allotted piece of work to do as part of a great whole. It does not matter whether we are laying the grand stones of a fine building or carving the beautiful capitals of the pillars, or only (?) digging for the foundation, or laying the mortar. I sometimes think we are or ought to be, working to meet each other, as some of you really do, from the two ends, or the shafts of a tunnel for instance; or, as some works may be done in different places even, and then pieced together by a skilful workman. Now, if you could imagine such an almost impossible piece of carelessness, as that when the time came that the tunnel should be finished, it was found that the men had been working on wrong levels, what a vexation it would be! And if when the building or work done in separate pieces was to be put together, it was found that some pieces were wanting—unfinished, or badly done—the effect of the whole would be spoiled. So our work in the world may be small or insignificant, or it may be an important piece; no matter, it is our own, and if we fail through carelessness or sloth, there is a weakness in that part from the want of our necessary piece; or, if supplemented by others, we ourselves lose the happiness of successful work.

You look into a beehive, and watch the busy workers ; each seems intent on a separate piece, but each is working for the general good, helping to build up those beautiful cells, or fill them with the honey dew so industriously collected. You watch a colony of ants, and observe the same thing, each tiny insect is doing its own part of a whole work, all helping to carry out a plan. An unskilled watcher of any great work sees a number of men or machines, performing each some part, which to him may seem useless in its insignificance, or inexplicable in its intricacy, but as the work progresses, as the building grows under the master's eye, it is apparent that all were conducing to the strength, and stability, or beauty of the whole ; and we know that the hidden joists and timbers, bricks, pins, and supports are quite as necessary, and that it is quite as important that they should be sound and well laid as those that are seen. If a very small piece of machinery gets out of gear, you know it very often has great results in stopping a work, if not bursting an engine, with all that that often involves. If one set of men strike, or if one only refuses to work, you know that is not the end of it ; but constantly the whole arrangement of a piece of work is interfered with. Often have I been vexed to know this, to find some that would willingly have been at work "at play," because their piece depended on others, who were regardless of anything but their own pleasure, and would not choose to do the necessary work at the right time.

We might multiply instances of this fact indefinitely ; but let us just inquire whether seeing we are so necessary one to the other, so intimately connected, we are doing our duty towards each other, towards our God. "None of us liveth to himself." "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever," "and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me." If each one honestly acted out these principles, the world would be very different from what it is, and would be growing daily more like the heaven that we long for, where the will of the Father is done as we daily pray that it may be done on earth.

You may say the earth is far enough from being a heaven. So it is, with all its jarring frets, and wild contentions, its Sabbath-breaking, its wails of misery heard above the mirth of fools and the song of the drunkard ; but we, each one of us, may be doing something, in the struggle against sin, and alleviation of suffering, to help forward a growing likeness. God requires us each to do our part. "Curse ye the inhabitants of Meroz, because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty," is a wonderful word, that we may put against this—"fellow-workers with God." Each one doing his or her appointed work under His eye, as for Him, as for eternity ; not going out of our station to do some one else's, not shrinking because it is too great or hard ; but daily, patiently fulfilling His will, and doing the little piece laid before us for the day, not refusing because it is in-

significant. Work is work, and whether it be quiet work at home, or more stirring work out of doors battling with the world, if done unto Him the least work is ennobled; while the grandest work done for self-seeking and in forgetfulness of Him, is counted as nothing worth, only fit for the fire.

“Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see;
And what I do in *any thing*,
To do it as for Thee.

“All may of Thee partake,
Nothing can be so mean
Which with this tincture, *For Thy sake*,
Will not grow bright and clean.

“A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.

“This is the famous stone,
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.”

But we make a mistake sometimes, and want to set the world to rights before the kingdom of Man-soul has been reduced to order by the Great King, before we ourselves have submitted to His control. There is a great work to be done, but when will all the people of Christian England awake to their high privileges and do it in the right way? There is a stirring spirit abroad, and people are ever pushing up and elbowing each other because *might*, they say, is *right*—a fretting against lawful restraints, think-

ing the world is all gone wrong, accusing God of mismanagement. (It looks terrible now it is written, but it is what we do when we defy Him, and think we could order this and arrange that so much better; when we cavil at His dealings, and ask why He has given us these laws; why He allows this or that, exercising ourselves in questions too high and hard for us, when we have no point to start from, in perfect knowledge of ourselves and of God or *His* purposes, who sees the end from the beginning.) And all because they will not submit their will to His, because they begin at the wrong end; they want to reform the world before they have reformed themselves; they do not understand Him, and they want an impossibility. They want Him to do His work in their way, instead of desiring to be taught to do their work in His way.

“Let every man sweep the street before his own door, and the street will soon be clean.” “If every one will mend one, we shall soon all be mended.” When Nehemiah undertook the superintendence of the work of restoration at Jerusalem, it was necessary that there should be a combined effort, but he wisely arranged a division of labour; and in the record of the repairs of the city wall, and of the watches to be appointed to guard against surprise by their relentless enemies, it is interesting to notice the oft-recurring words, “Every one over against his own house.” And here is a lesson for us, and the direction to watch holds good for us. We are not to wait for others to do their

part; are we doing ours? The wall was soon built round Jerusalem, because each person repaired over against his own house. The city was likely to be well guarded when every one was set on his watch-tower. "What have *you* done with your sins? What have *you* done with your soul? What are *you* doing for Christ?" are three questions which I heard a missionary ask many years ago, but I never could forget them, and now I should like you to answer them honestly and thoughtfully. Are you waiting to correct your faults till other people correct theirs? Have you taken your sins to Jesus; and, having obtained pardon, are you daily striving against sin, watching lest your enemies steal a march on you, entreating for the help of the Holy Spirit that you may henceforth live unto God, having a conscience void of offence? Have you asked God to make your heart clean, that your life may be pure and holy, and your home testify that you, at least, are, in His strength, repairing and setting a watch over against your own house? "Here is my heart, Lord; take it, for I cannot give it thee; keep it, for I cannot keep it for thee."

And this leads us to the awful thought of the influence we have one upon another, which should, indeed, make us very careful of our life and conversation, as it has been said, "*Nobody ever went to heaven alone, and nobody ever went to hell alone.*"

We are in a strange place, we hesitate to take a certain track, we doubt as to where it will lead us, or whether it is possible to follow it out, but we

notice a footprint, and in the distance descry some one on the track. We then determine to follow, uncertain whether it be quite the right path for us, but decided by seeing that some one is on before. That person pursues his way, quite unconscious that we are influenced by his choice of road. So, in our way through life, unconscious influence meets us at every turn. Such an one has done this, why may not I? And the spirit is roused up to nerve itself to the determination that what has been done shall be done again, and that we will fight our way even through difficulties and dangers, and never give in.

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time—
Footprints that, perhaps another,
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother
Seeing shall take heart again.”

Or, alas! sometimes the unconscious influence is for evil. We see some one just going as close to evil as possible, and, as we think, getting no harm, and we are tempted to try the same experiment, and, it may be, with a bitter result as to the danger for us.

The eyes of the world are upon us: closely united as we are to one another, we cannot act as separate beings; we cannot get rid of our individuality, neither can we of our responsibility. You have thrown a stone into the water, and often amused

yourself with watching the ever-widening circles produced by the disturbance. Did you ever think that was a picture of your influence? You cannot stay to watch where those circles end, for they go on, ever in larger sweep, till they touch the opposite shore. So, neither can you say where ends the influence of a word, an act, ay, even a look of yours. You may have thought nothing of it, but some one has noticed it, and been affected by it, and its influence spreads on and on to eternity. The force of your example has *told*, and *how*? For good or for evil, which? * You have cast a word into the air, and those who have studied the science of sound tell us that it is something the same as throwing a

* Since writing this, I have met with one of Mrs. Sewell's little books, and, in case you may not have read it, I copy out these few lines from "The Old Man's Story," as they say, under another figure, what I have been trying to impress upon you :—

“ How many men, in ages long gone by,
Had lived their life upon these uplands dry ;
Had dropped their little seed upon the plain,
To sow itself again, and yet again,
And evermore to garner precious grain ;
Or left behind them a pernicious weed,
To scatter year by year its baleful seed,
To grow, and multiply, and still grow on,
Till the last sowing day has come and gone !
Till the great harvest, gathered in complete,
Shall stand in light before the judgment seat,
With every item, in its full amount,
Faithfully noted to its right account ;
Where each astonished labourer may read
The mighty product of his little seed—
His work emblazoned through eternal days,
Remorse eternal, or eternal praise.”

stone into water. You have displaced some air, and the effect of that displacement is to go on for ever, in ever-vibrating waves of sound ; so that they say, if we had powers of hearing sufficiently acute, we might hear all the words ever spoken, retained in the air as witnesses for or against us. Is not this an awful thought ? If we could realise it, should we not be more careful of our words ? Think of the words that drop lightly out of careless lips ; the oaths, the sharp, hard, unkind words, the foolish, sinful words that are rolling round in what seems to us the still air ; and these all having their influence on those who heard them. Is it not enough to make us lay our hand on our mouth and fear to speak again ; at least, to pray with greater earnestness, " Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips." How often do we say one to another, " I should not have said that, if I had known you would hear it ;" and God hears all. As I saw it lately put with reference to those who were talking lightly and speculating curiously about some of His wonderful works, of the meanings of which we know so little, " I think they would not dare to talk so if they remembered that they can't talk behind God's back." I think we should not dare to talk as we do if the solemn thought of the influence of our words were ever with us, and we remembered, " By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

A man who was to answer for his faith with his life was under examination in old time. Suddenly,

his quickened ear detected the scratching of a pen behind the tapestry hangings of the chamber, and he knew that his words were being taken down as witnesses against him. How doubly careful would this make him as to what he said. We are told that for "every idle word that men shall speak" they shall give an account; and that the dead shall be judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. But, besides this, now in the hearts of those around, in the hearts and lives of those who hear our words, is a record kept (sometimes unconsciously), which may be as surely to our condemnation as if written in the record above. O friends! let us be careful of this awful talent of influence—which belongs to us, which is born with us, which we cannot get rid of, whether we will or no—and watch ourselves that we exercise always a *right* influence, whether conscious or unconscious, knowingly or not, upon one another.

It is a happy thing when the unconscious influence is directly for good. How happy if any one can take notice of you;—such an one has turned over a new leaf, he looks so much happier, he has got his clothes and all his things about him in a comfortable home, he does not go to the public to drink as he used—and being led to watch you more closely to discover the cause, is led on by the silent force of your example, seeing you quietly pursuing the way of holiness, though you may never have spoken one word to him on the subject, to determine, "If he can, why can't I?" And so, in eternity,

may be, his wife and children will rise up to call you blessed, though you yourself may be ready to say, How can this be ?

Oh ! never set a bad example. Remember, as I said just now, the eyes of the world are upon you, and God and the holy angels are watching to see how you use your talent of influence, for which account will have to be rendered, just as for any other gift of God. Have a care of your words and actions, lest you may put a stumbling-block in the way of another, if it be only of a little child. Never teach a child to say a bad word, or do a wrong thing ; never deceive a child, saying, " Am I not in sport ? for to do so is to be as a madman who casteth fire-brands, arrows, and death." Even if you have no children of your own, remember that the children around you are to be the men and women who in their turn will act on others, and be careful what you do before them ; guard them as you would guard them from danger, as you would save them if possible from infection, lest they learn to think lightly of sin, of God's holy name, day, and book, by noticing your carelessness in these respects. " It is impossible but that offences will come, but woe unto him through whom they come ! It were better that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." I remember being so grieved at hearing a mother say of her little one, only just able to babble his baby talk, " He hears his father swear and imitates him, and then his father laughs."

Oh, what a sorrowful seed-sowing for a bitter harvest!

It is a pitiful thing to think of, that the direct influence of so many is for evil. Not content with going wrong themselves, they deliberately try to lead others wrong, tempting to actual sin, or insinuating doubts of God's truth, undermining faith, instilling infidel notions or impure thoughts. "Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" (Mal. ii. 10), instead of remembering "that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." In history we read of kings and princes who have earned a noble name, and by their wise and prudent dealing have won the title of the Good, the Wise, the Beneficent; but in the Bible history of the kings of Israel we have a sad epithet given to the first king of the ten tribes. Jeroboam is almost never spoken of without the addition of the terrible words, "who made Israel to sin." My dear friends, let us see to it that this description belongs not of right to us. Must not some of you shrink away abashed because you know you have made another to sin?—taunted, and tempted, and jeered at one perhaps who was trying to do better till you have made him give up, and break his pledge and his resolutions together—enticed one who wished to remember home lessons, and keep God's day holy, into Sabbath-breaking and wrong-doing. It has gone to my heart when I have heard some say that others will not let them alone if they wish to do right. "They do tempt me so,"

said one very sadly to me one evening as he was wandering away by himself, any where so that he could get out of the reach of those that wanted to make him sin. "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also."

I cannot help copying a few words out of a book written two hundred years ago. "O take heed of soliciting others to sin! thou takest the devil's office, as I may say, out of his hand. To tempt another is worse than to sin thyself. It speaks sin to be of great growth in that man that doth it knowingly and willingly." Let us take care that by folly of ours we rouse not the angry passions of others. There are some who, knowing a person's weakness, will amuse themselves with it, trying to rouse a hasty person to a passion, or to keep an irritable one in a perpetual fret; these also must remember the "woe unto him by whom the offence cometh." God keep us from wilfully or unconsciously making those around us to sin! It will be a life sorrow to us, if having obtained pardon ourselves through our Lord Jesus Christ, having truly repented of all our past sins, we yet know that through our mistakes, our folly, our bad example—if not by direct influence—we have made one or another to sin; have set the stone rolling, down to the bottom, perhaps, for any power that we have to stop it. Lord, lay not this sin to our charge!

As Gurnall says, again, "O do you not know what you do when you tempt? I will tell you; you do *that which you cannot undo by your own repent-*

ance; thou poisonest one with error, initiatest another in the devil's school (alehouse, I mean), but afterwards maybe thou seest thy mistake, and recantest thine error, thy folly, and givest over thy drunken trade. Art thou sure now to rectify and convert them with thyself? Alas, poor creature, that is out of thy power! And what a grief to thy spirit will it be, to see these going to hell on thy errand, and thou not able to turn them back! thou mayest cry out as Lamech, 'I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.' Nay, when thou art asleep in thy grave, he whom thou seducest may have drawn in others, and thy name may be quoted to commend the opinion and practice in others, by which (as it is said, though in another sense, 'Abel being dead, yet speaketh'), thou mayest, though dead, sin in those that are alive, generation after generation. A little spark kindled by the error of one hath cost the pains of many ages to quench it, and when thought to be out hath broke forth again." "Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way: but let it rather be healed." "Strive to do all the good you can, to all the people you can, in all the ways you can, as long as you can."

"No star ever rose

And set, without influence somewhere. Who knows
What earth needs from earth's lowest creature? No life
Can be pure in its purpose, and strong in its strife,
And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.

“ Honest love, honest sorrow,
Honest work for the day, honest hope for the morrow,
Are these worth nothing more than the hand they make
weary ;
The heart they leave sadden'd, the life they leave dreary.
Hush, . . . ‘He that overcometh shall all things inherit.’ ”

“ Go make thy garden fair as thou canst,
Thou workest never alone :
Perchance he whose plot is next to thine
Will see it and mend his own.

“ And the next may copy his, sweetheart,
Till all grows fair and sweet,
And when the Master comes at eve,
Happy faces His coming will greet.

“ Then shall thy joy be full, sweetheart,
In the garden so fair to see,
In the Master's words of praise for all,
In a look of His own for thee.”

IV.

CLEANSING FOR EARTH AND HEAVEN.

"Woe unto thee! Wilt thou not be made clean? When shall it once be?"

WHEN I first began to make friends with working people, the idea of the utility, comfort, and necessity of baths and wash-houses took strong possession of my mind. In those days I was only feeling my way, and learning lessons as I went. I saw much misery, and had to find out some of its causes, and some of its remedies. One thing I was sure of; that if the houses were better, there would be more pride in keeping them bright; and if the houses and persons were tidier and cleaner, there would be more comfort and better health.

Knowing the discomfort and unwholesomeness of accumulated dust and dirt, and seeing how things and clothes, to say nothing of people, are spoiled for want of constant care as to cleansing, I wished to help you as to the means. For I know also how impossible it is, with

the appliances at command in your homes, (so often, I am sorry to say, the single room for parlour, kitchen, bedroom, and all), that you should be able to enjoy the luxury of an all-over wash, or a good bath; also the getting through the week's wash satisfactorily, is often, I know, a difficult matter. There is, perhaps, a scarcity of water, or a quarrel who is to have the copper first; there is, perhaps, the trouble of getting the water, or of getting it *hot*, which is often the excuse for *half-rinsing* the things. The drying frequently has to be done in the living-room, (even supposing the washing has not), producing an unwholesome, close smelling, steamy atmosphere, which you hardly notice possibly, being so accustomed to it. This, however, is enough to take away the husband's appetite, coming in from his work in the fresh air; and must eventually tell on the health and so on the temper of the dwellers in the home. Seeing all this, I felt I must do something towards a remedy if possible. So I mounted my hobby, and set myself earnestly to work. I thought the first thing I must do was to procure the erection of a suitable building, and that then the evident benefit would soon make itself felt. I made all inquiries as to results where the experiment had been tried, but, alas! for my hopes and plans, with a very unsatisfactory finding. I found that the necessary piece of ground and material would cost so much, and the whole scheme be so expensive; and then, with very great doubt as to its success, that at last I was

obliged *very reluctantly* to give up my hope of being able to give my friends this measure of help and comfort.

Various objections have been raised as to the wash-houses, but it seems to me they might be overcome; and where the wife is fond of a little variety, the washing-day might do for the day out, which would meet her wish. I cannot quite see why baths and wash-houses don't pay. I think they should. For one thing, perhaps, very few of us like new ways, new-fangled notions. When we get into fixed habits or ways of doing a thing, we are often content to go on running in a groove to the end of our lives; but if a thing is really proved to be good,—another person's way of doing a thing to be really better than ours,—we are surely foolish not to make a trial, and the trial in this instance once fairly made,—it must be a good, honest trial,—I feel sure that the increase of comfort would induce a constant use of the wash-houses. I often have it said to me, "It may be old, but it *is* clean." This is as it should be, but I should like to make it easier for all to say.

Then as to the baths, I should have thought there could not have been a question. We almost all of us like to have a clean face, but the face is not the only part of the body that needs cleansing. You may have heard or read lectures on health, showing you how, if the pores of the skin are choked by greasy dirt, the body is reduced to an unhealthy state, and there is consequent lassitude and loss of

appetite. It requires some little effort on rising from a warm bed, to plunge into a cold bath; or on coming home from dusty dirty work, to make a *complete* change of clothing; but the comfort would soon make us overlook the effort. I used to meet the men who worked in a gas factory, and pity their miserable look, with their grimy, unwashed, or half-washed faces and necks. Great was my surprise to hear that there were baths provided for them, as I should imagine, from their appearance, that those I knew but seldom availed themselves of the privilege of using them; and had they done so, the depression and languor which drove them to the public-house, would, I think, have been removed. I would entreat all working-men to make good use of the bath, at least once a week. If those who waste their money and time on Saturday afternoons in the public-house, would but save 3d. (or 6d. if they like a first-class bath), and try the experiment, I think they would be fresher on the Sunday morning, with less headache, or stupor, less inclination to waste the early Sunday morning hours in bed; more ready to rise early and dress in time for church. I wish I could persuade all my friends to try the effect, and thus to spend some of the money now wasted at the public-house, or at least to save a few shillings for a thorough good sponge, the use of which would be a great refreshment, and would pave the way to the necessity of a bath.

Have you ever noticed in reading your Bibles how God's religion goes into the very heart of our

every-day lives? and how often after a rule that we possibly might not have thought much of, there are the words, "I am the Lord," which immediately give it a dignity. Such, for instance, as "Thou shalt not curse the deaf or put a stumbling-block before the blind. I am the Lord." "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people." "Just balances, just weights shall ye have." "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. I am the Lord." And there are many remarkable directions given, which, perhaps, we should not have expected, but the object surely is to make us think more of the dignity of our life, and of the holiness of God. Now we might have thought that the cleansing of our bodies was too mean a subject for a holy book, but there is a great deal about cleanliness in the Bible. The directions about it in the law were very stringent. When the priests were set apart for their holy office, not only were they to be anointed with oil, but they were to be washed with water before the holy garments were put on them. "And Moses took Aaron and his sons and washed them with water, saying unto the congregation, This is the thing which the Lord commanded to be done." Whenever they entered the Tabernacle or Temple they were to wash; a large laver of brass for the purpose being part of the furnishing of the place of worship. Soon after the wonderful deliverance of the children of Israel from their cruel bondage in the land of Egypt, God announced His intention to speak to Moses, so that "the people"

might "hear and believe" Moses "for ever." As we prepare for an audience with any great or royal personage to the best of our ability, so they were directed to get ready to hear the words of Him who ruleth over all the earth. And what was the direction? "Go and sanctify the people, *and let them wash their clothes*, and be ready the third day. And they washed their clothes." Now, why was this direction given?

God teaches us holy lessons by very simple directions, by type, figure, and parable; just as we teach the children by pictures and simple stories, leading them on continually to the ability to understand. And now for the lesson taught by the command to the whole congregation to be particular about outward purification on this occasion; and by the sight of the priests being washed when they were dedicated to their work, and daily washing their hands and feet before going into God's house and ministering at the altar, "to burn offerings made by fire unto the Lord," "that they die not."—"God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin. In His sight the very heavens are not clean; He charges His angels with folly; how much more abominable and filthy is man who drinketh up iniquity like water?" Man, therefore, needs purification, cleansing from the defilement of sin before he can hope to be accepted of God, before he can stand in that holy presence. And in the days when the teaching was much by the eye in sign and symbol, he must acknowledge by deed as well

as word that it is so. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" Only "He that hath clean hands and a pure heart." "I will wash my hands in innocency, and so will I come unto thine altar." Here is an evident reference to the daily practice of the priests; and we may take up the thought "wash my hands," as a type of the cleansing the soul needs; take hold of the innocency of Jesus and plead *that* as more than covering all deficiencies. We are to honour God, body, soul, and spirit, in the least as well as in the greatest things, remembering, "*Whatsoever*" we do, it is to be done "to the glory of God." So in the matter of cleanliness we may and ought to honour Him; and I cannot but think that Paul's words, "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water," may have a literal meaning as well as a deep and holy spiritual one.

In the East, the land of the Bible, constant ablutions are necessary and refreshing. We read of the daughter of Pharaoh, the proud king of Egypt, that with her maidens she came down to wash herself at the river. The practice of wearing sandals instead of shoes necessitated frequent washing of the feet. We read in the account of Abraham entertaining the three angels (Gen. xviii. 4), "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree." In the 24th chapter we have the interesting story

of the journey of Abraham's servant in search of a suitable wife for Isaac. Laban courteously received the steward Eliezer; "and the man gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him." When Joseph's brethren went the second time into Egypt to buy bread, because of the sore famine, the steward "brought these men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet" (Gen. xliii. 24). It was to the custom of attention to the requirements and comfort of a guest in this respect, immediately on entering the house, that our Lord refers, when He gave that gentle commendation to the poor weeping woman, combined with the grave rebuke to the proud Pharisee, who had invited Him to be his guest and then treated Him with indignity. "And he turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head" (Luke vii. 44). Also, on the night before His death, when He performed the office for His disciples, as John tells us (xiii. 4, 5).

And as we may learn heavenly lessons from earthly things, as we see the constant need there is of cleansing the body—the dust and dirt of this work-a-day world so soon defiling what we had thought most carefully cleansed—so are we taught that the defilement of sin contaminates our souls, creeps in as the dust does, effecting a lodgment where we had thought it impossible, and, therefore, the need of constant wash-

ing in "the fountain opened," the need of daily, hourly application to the cleansing blood of Christ.

" Vile I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

And as we gladly lay aside soiled garments to clothe ourselves with clean ones provided for us, let us be willing to lay aside the filthy rags of our own righteousness, and take hold of the Saviour's righteousness—

" Naked, come to thee for dress,
Guilty, plead thy righteousness,"

that on our behalf the words may be spoken, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet." Then the glad words heard in vision by Zechariah (iii. 3-5), of Joshua the high priest, will sound in our ears, to our great and endless comfort: "Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment;" and we shall be constrained to break forth into song, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. lxi. 10).

"Cleanliness is next to godliness," and we often find that where the "clean water" has been sprinkled on the heart, making the life pure and clean, there is an immediate effort for the purification of the person and the home. If we have a wound we

cover it up, and many have a wound or scar that the world knows not of; but the covering of it does not take it away: it is there still. To have a clean face and hands is good, but not *all*. To hide a soil or defilement of body or in the house does not take it away; it is there for all that it is so carefully hidden. To break through some bad habits, and outwardly reform a life in many ways, is good, but not enough. Because sin is thrust into the background, and glossed over by the outward turning over of a new leaf, we cannot plume ourselves that it is gone. People may cease to cast it up to us, but it is there still, the plague spot, the defilement, and it will be there until we have been wholly cleansed in the "fountain opened for sin and for all uncleanness"—until we have cast all our sins at the foot of the cross, nor kept *one* back, earnestly praying, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. Wash me *thoroughly* from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin;" "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Then we may go away with this blessed assurance comforting our inmost heart, "He that is washed is clean every whit;" for "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." And so we may join in the chorus ringing through the earth—sometimes whispered, sometimes shouted, as faith is weak or strong—"Unto him that loved us, and washed us in his own blood, be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. i. 5, 6); and cheer ourselves with the hope of joining in the "new song" sung by the

multitude who walk with Him in white, according to His promise, having "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," where "there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth."

God grant that of no one of us these terrible words may be said when it is too late to apply to the cleansing blood, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still;" but having so many precious "promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers shall inherit the kingdom of God? And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 9-11).

And one thing more. Let us beware of seeking to cleanse ourselves otherwise than as it is written. We seek the "pure water" to wash our bodies. We must not, then, ask of other fountains than the one appointed, "May I not wash in them and be clean?" nor scorn the direction, "Wash and be clean," because it is so simple, but, drawing near reverently, with "full assurance of faith," test the efficacy of the cleansing blood of Jesus. Then, even as Naaman, obeying Elisha's direction to wash in the river Jordan, found himself healed, and that

"his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child," so shall we find, to our unspeakable comfort, that the leprosy and defilement of sin shall be removed, and we shall be clean.

We may only half wash our bodies if we please, but in the end our health will suffer; and our spiritual health never can be good until we have got this promise fulfilled to us, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." There is no such thing, however, as half cleansing, half washing in the blood of Jesus, half clothing in His "spotless righteousness." Neither is there any such thing as cleansing ourselves. For, though the word is, "O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness that thou mayest be saved; how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?" "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purify your hearts, ye double-minded," it is also, "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God." Though it is, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well;" it is also, "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

" There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains.

“ The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day,
And there may I, though vile as he,
Wash all my sins away.

“ Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed Church of God
Be saved to sin no more.”

V

SELF-CONSTITUTED RIGHTS.

You often speak of your Rights ; did you ever think what they really are, and whether you are availing yourself of them ?

We often hear it said, "I have a right to do as I please, it does not matter to any one what I do with myself—my money—my time ; how I treat my husband—my wife—my child ; how I behave to those about me." When we were speaking about Influence we saw that we are too closely connected with one another to be able to say this. And, before we can say it, we must see that there is no other right with which this one clashes. Supposing there is One who lends you these things, and to whom you have to account for the right use of them ; One who can claim your service by right ; One who may come to you at any moment and say, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward," how then ? And is it not so ? God who made us giveth us "all things richly to enjoy ; He giveth life and breath, and all

things," and He says, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are his." He says, "This people have I formed," not that they may live to themselves, but "that they may show forth my praise."

If you are idle there is so much waste of power to the state, or, at least, to the community among whom you dwell; you rob your fellows of the benefit of a devoted energy, which, added to theirs, might have accomplished much. If you save your money in a miserly way, or if you throw it away rashly, you waste so much capital, which, properly laid out, might have brought in so much interest; perhaps not in pounds, shillings, and pence, but in a harvest of love and kind feeling, in the satisfaction evolved by such commendatory words as those spoken of the poor widow, who out of her deep poverty threw "two mites, which make a farthing," into the Temple treasury, "She hath cast in more than they all," (Luke xxi. 1-4); or those other words, spoken of what the offerer thought small service, "She hath done what she could."

We have no *right* to do a great many things that we constantly do, excusing ourselves sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, if unpleasant consequences follow. "I did not think" is not a sufficient excuse when accused of exercising our self-constituted right of working as much folly and wrong as we please.

Young people have no right to marry in the

reckless manner in which they do. They think it is a matter which concerns no one but themselves, though the case is far otherwise. Of course it concerns themselves first; and just for themselves it is a pity they don't consider a little the right thing to do, and also that there is a wrong way of doing the right thing. People marry too often, quite forgetting that (as a man said to me with reference to a young nephew who was determined to be married very foolishly) "it's something more than going to church and home again." That is it, the "*home again*." They quite forget that though they may like each other well enough for a walk, and an hour's talk, the rub will be when the door is shut on these two alone; when the dinners have to be cooked, and paid for, and the money earned for this; the husband's clothes mended, his wants carefully attended to, and the wife's wishes and comfort kindly consulted. They forget the solemnity of the marriage service, the promises there made to each other in the sight of God, the serious import of the words "till death us do part," and the tender pleading for God's blessing that they "may *so* live together in this life that in the world to come" they "may have life everlasting."

Sadly too often people "marry in haste to repent at leisure;" sadly too often the want of forethought in providing furniture, obliging them to go into expensive lodgings. Too often the husband can hardly support himself through his reckless folly, and then, fruitful source of discomfort and unhappi-

ness in married life, the wife has to go out to earn her own living; no matter whether his dinner or tea is ready when the husband comes home, he must see to that himself. No wonder if in this comfortless state of things he flings off to the public-house where all is bright and cheery, so that the wife when she comes home in her turn finds the house deserted and wretched. Perhaps she goes to seek her husband, and then is tempted to take a little which he offers her, and *then* the leak is sprung which will occasion the foundering of the good ship of home-comfort, and *then* the wreck of happiness and love is certain.

People have not the right to do as they please in the matter of marriage without any common prudence any more than in any other matter. We must take counsel of ourselves, even if we choose not to consult our friends. And would that we all knew the comfort and happiness of referring everything to our God, inquiring of Him before taking an important step; for truly "the way of man is not in himself, it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," though we often pride ourselves it is. "Which of you intending to build a tower sitteth not down first and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" And if you mean to have a comfortable home, it behoves you to see that you are able to keep it in comfort. Not, as too many do, carelessly rushing into the cares of housekeeping without proper provision and forethought, and then expecting those you call rich to

support you on the first access of sickness or short work, or amid the cares of an increasing family, or dearness of provisions. "A prudent man looketh well to his going, the simple pass on and are punished," and the punishment is sad enough sometimes.

You cannot expect happiness in married life unless you do the right thing in the right way. Oh, how much pain and sorrow do some lay up for themselves, by pleasing themselves, as they call it, instead of obeying God's simple rules, which are ordered for our happiness as well as His glory. Grieved indeed am I too often to perceive how carelessly God's sacred ordinance of marriage is regarded, when "going to church to get the knot tied" is made a salve to the conscience, and all is made believe to be right now, whereas things have only been set straight in man's eyes. Mutual recriminations follow, and years after the sore is apparently healed—and the wrong done forgiven and forgotten may be by those around—the pain is felt; something turns up to rouse the sigh and the wish that things had been different. "A babe in the house is a well-spring of gladness." It is a bitter thing when an innocent babe must ever be the mute accuser of its parents. I cannot forget the pain I felt on one occasion. A mother had told me that her son was going to be married. I had known him some little time, and thought him a nice tidy young man. I did not know the young woman he was engaged to, but as I am always

glad to hear of people's happiness I congratulated his mother, and hoped that he had made a good choice of one who would not only keep him a comfortable home, but help him to live rightly. I promised a Bible, and they were to come for it together as soon as convenient after the marriage. But when they came I was covered with shame and confusion, a whisper of the state of things having reached me. I could put no date of the marriage beneath their name, and could only take refuge in prayer, entreating them to pray for themselves. A babe was born within a week, and that child is the only one of their children (and they have had many) which has lived. I have wondered whether they have ever noticed or been touched by this fact. I was lately intensely grieved with people I had thought far too respectable to do such wrong, who, with nothing but their own carelessness of right and wrong to hinder them from keeping God's law, delayed their marriage till their babe was two months old. The man being then out of work, the wife returned to her place of service, leaving her infant to the care of others. What hope of happiness can there be with such a beginning?

I have often felt troubled by noticing how little love and happiness, how little tenderness and consideration for one another there seems sometimes in the homes of my friends. Mistakes in the choice of a wife or the acceptance of a husband, often rued bitterly too late, have a great deal to do with this. "A prudent wife is from the Lord," and surely a

good husband is also. You remember Eliezer prayed that he might find the right person to take home as a wife for his master Abraham's son; and surely so important a matter as marriage should be well considered and prayed over.

I am often sorry to see that the husband and wife are not helps meet for each other as God intended, and that they constantly seem bent (unconsciously, perhaps, to themselves) on hindering one another as much as possible. Very grievous was it to hear a wife say of her husband, "I am sure he will drag me to hell with himself." She had a bad temper, and knew it, and was, as I sincerely hoped, striving against it in God's strength. She was seeking Jesus, but she would not believe that that was a proof that He was waiting to be gracious to her; and her husband's fondness for the drink was a perpetual stumblingblock to her, used of Satan to keep her out of the way. She would tell me that, just when she thought she was getting on, just when she had been very calm and patient for some time, he would come in and demand money and "carry on so," that she forgot her resolutions, and, giving way, would answer back; then with tears she would mourn over her failure, and say it was no use trying again;—and yet he was a nice man if it had not been for the drink. I trust the good Lord may have taught and strengthened them both, and that they may now be helping each other on in the way she desired to tread, and which he acknowledged

was right; so that I may meet them in heaven if no more on earth.

If men will marry idle, gossiping slatterns, or finely-dressed ladies, who don't like to soil their hands or their clothes by household work; if girls persist in marrying those whom they have been warned against, those who are "only sometimes just a little the worse for liquor," making sure they will be different when they have settled down; if people marry because they "suppose they are to have one another," they must expect to reap the consequences. And it will require an immense amount of care and earnest striving, patience and prayer, to rectify the evil when either or both wake up to the stern reality.

Another cause of the friction which troubles me is, that people stand up for their rights in a wrong way, forgetting that the first angry word, "the beginning a strife is as when one letteth out water."

Your *rights*! Yes, I wish some husbands would insist on their rights,—their right to have a clean floor and sweet room comfortably arranged for them to sit down in when they come in tired from their work, well-ordered, smiling children, instead of the reverse of all these things. All which might be accomplished by a little judicious arrangement on the part of the wife, and by a determination to make her husband and her home her first consideration, next to her God and her own soul; by a resolution to give up the foolish habit of gossiping,

and the idea that she ought to help to earn money by going out to work—that terrible delusion which proves to be such a fearful mistake—the home left to take care of itself, the husband's meals to cook themselves, or be cooked by him in the very discomfort of haste and a troubled spirit—the children, their clothes, and everything else about to go to rack and ruin for want of a guiding eye and hand.

Rights! Yes, I wish the wife would insist on her rights—to kind words and sympathy, to help in ruling the children, to a proper share of the wages on which “to keep the house going” comfortably, a right to her husband's company if she keeps him a comfortable home; instead of the sore wrong, which is often the cause of sore hearts and angry reproaches, the money thrown away in dissipation on the Saturday nights, and the evenings spent at “the public.” But then all this, by husband and wife, must be insisted on, not by the force of blustering, and a strong arm or a loud tongue, but by the force of loving, gentle determination to do the right thing, and leave the result with God.

I remember being made an unwilling party to a quarrel between a husband and wife once when we were staying in Devonshire. Just across the road from our little home were several cottages in a block, surrounded with a nice piece of kitchen garden and orchard. The kitchens were bricked, to be sure, but they were large and airy, and the bedrooms above were very good. I thought the people

might be so happy who lived in that pretty spot; and, as opportunity offered, I made acquaintance with them. One of the cottages was occupied by a young man, who worked at the clay-works two good miles away over the moor, by his still younger wife, their first little one, and a lodger, I am sorry to say, as I think lodgers are a delusion, and young people are better off by themselves. I often noticed him working in the garden in spare time, his wife and child assisting by looking on, and I thought it a pleasant family picture. But one evening my attention was attracted by very loud talking, and, looking across, I saw the husband push his wife through the door and bolt the lower half. Most of the Devonshire cottage doors are divided in the middle, and the lower half is usually kept shut, while the upper part is left open to let in the light and outside life. I was fearful that bodily harm might come of it, and prayed to the God of peace that these evil tempers might be quenched in His love. There stood the foolish girl kicking at the unyielding door, and they both talking at each other through the open upper half, the poor baby's crying adding to the confusion.

The fact was that his tea was not ready on his return from work, and more, the water was not only not boiling, but not fetched. Of course, his wife ought to have got beforehand; but some wives know it is sometimes rather a difficult matter when "the baby is just a handful about its teeth," and William never took into consideration how Sarah

might have been hindered. (I had heard the baby crying nearly all day, and knew there was a little excuse for her, though, I dare say, being rather inexperienced, she gave herself more trouble than necessary, as people generally do who don't know how to set about a thing.) So when she asked him to help her by filling the kettle from the stream that babbled its way down from the hill above, he grew very angry, and pushed her outside the door, which made her so angry in turn that she forgot she might have mended matters even then by running to get the water herself, which she was obliged to do in the end. The consequence of it all was that, by reason of the quarrel, his tea was much longer delayed,—but angry people rarely consider that they generally contrive to punish themselves,—and my fear was that he would go to the village alehouse when I saw him go out shortly after.

I had got on to a friendly footing with them, sitting down to read with them, and lending them books, so I felt I must tell them how sorry I was at what I had unwillingly seen and heard. I managed to catch them separately first, and then together. And one day I found a nice opportunity for a quiet chat with Sarah over this, and some other little matters, while she was preparing an “under the kettle” rabbit pie for her husband's supper. This “under the kettle” was a novelty to me, so I became much interested in its preparation, by way of getting her attention to what I had to say, and hoped that William would be in a good mind to enjoy it.

The fire is laid there on the hearth of a large open chimney, and the fuel is almost entirely of "sods" of dried peat. A little of this firing was laid under a flat piece of iron, on which the bread or pie to be baked was placed; the huge crock, which does duty for boiling purposes, was then turned upside down over it, and heated sods were piled all round and over this, and they assured me the result was as good as in the most perfect oven.

Why have I gone out of my way, as you may think, to tell you of this little scene? Because I want you to see and to think over the impression such a thing makes on an outsider, how it strikes a stranger. Why should you not be gentlemen and ladies in your manners, habits, words? You look out sharp enough for any failure in those above you, but you think it does not matter for yourselves, that your work and circumstances being rough, is a sufficient excuse. Each one that is rough makes another rougher, but you might "be pitiful, be courteous." You call each other lady and gentleman; I don't object to the term, but to its applicability. I should like to see you all such, and if you let the religion of Jesus do its work, you would be. For the religion of Jesus, albeit very brave, is very tender too. We often find the strongest, most high-spirited animals, and the bravest men, most amenable and most gentle with women and children. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil-speaking be put away from you with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-

hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." We should remember our own need of forgiveness, and our own often provocations of God and those around us, as a motive for tenderness. And if we did so, and strove more to imitate Christ, and prayed more to grow like Him; if we studied His likeness, and tried to walk even as He walked, thinking what He would have said then, what He would have done now, in all the varied circumstances that arise to perplex and ruffle the spirit, the world would go a great deal smoother, with far less of clamour and perturbation and wear and tear of our spirits, ay, and of our health too; for I am sure you must have felt that a burst of passion or a day of fretful irritability "takes it out of one." We all want to be more habitual in our use of "The Oiled Feather." *

It is not money or birth that makes *ladies* and *gentlemen*. "Manners maketh the man," and I have known real gentle breeding in a very poor home, and have received a perfect lady's letter from a country cottage, the writer having been under the great Refiner's eye in sickness many months, and taught by God's Holy Spirit. Lately, in Cumberland, on applying for information as to a road over the mountains, we were referred to a man cleaning a carriage, "That *gentleman* will tell you." It was not his occupation that made me doubt, but "that gentleman" had his mouth so full of tobacco, and his head so full of beer, that he could hardly

* See a little book of that name by Rev. W. Power.

answer a question. And fancy a poor woman confidentially telling me, "The *lady* who used to be in this room is gone away, got into trouble, you know, and they fetched her away on *Sunday*; don't you tell that I said so." I went away thinking sadly enough; poor young thing, I wish she had been a lady in thought and feeling, and then I should not have heard this. I am sometimes afraid to ask where such an one is, fearing lest the "gone away" has a further meaning, and that the change of air is compelled and free of expense to themselves, while taken at great expense to the country. On this occasion I inquired of another where the husband was; he was gone away too for a little, but whether that meant by his own will or not I could not press the inquiry to find out. I asked for the children. There was only a babe of seven months; "that she has with her," was the reply. If so, I could not help thinking what a sad home for an infant, though perhaps it might be better taken care of than in her own home, and what a pitiful tale of a home broken up through the working of sin.

You readily accord respect to those above you if they act in a way to gain your respect. I have to thank you for the way in which you treat me, always respectfully, always kindly, and if any one has seemed likely to transgress by rough word or manner others are always ready to cry shame and apologise. But I want you to be more respectful and kind and gentle one to another. As I went up a stair to visit a poor young man dying in consumption, I heard

loud voices. There were jangling harsh words and worse. I found the door a little open, which perhaps accounted for my hearing actual words all the way up. My knock produced silence, and my entrance changed the aspect of things. Smiles and gentle words and tones greeted me, and after sitting a little I ventured to tell them the impression it all made upon me, saying it was indeed no new thing, my step or appearance often producing a hush, a hiding of the newspaper on Sunday, or a rush away that I may not see and reprove. I came sadly away from that room too, thinking how strange it was that not even the presence of such sickness as it seems to us must shortly terminate in death, whose shadow dwells even now in the room, should have a softening influence; and what an atmosphere for a dying youth to breathe! How is it possible that holy thoughts can be fostered there; conviction of sin can be wrought there; the soul there get ready for its great change? Alas! it was a sorrowful state of things; but the word stands true and ever full of encouragement, "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy that it cannot hear." "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," and "I will work, and who shall let it?"

I one day happened on a terrible quarrel between a mother and her grown-up son. My entrance stopped his words, but the look of anger on his face was very terrible to see, as he rose hastily from the table, and sitting down by the glowing fire *he wished himself in hell!* I could not help pleading with

him as to the terrible meaning of his words, and asking, if he could not bear his hand among those hot coals, how he thought he could bear to "dwell with everlasting burnings." But that mother had much to answer for. Oh, how she did aggravate him! My presence and words were alike ineffectual to stop the torrent of her tears and reproaches. Oh, if we could only all learn to rule our spirit, and remember that "yielding pacifieth great offences," there would not then be so many sore hearts and sore heads as there are.

Bring up the boys and girls tenderly. Don't let them hear the angry reproaches, the rough words, the sounding slap. Don't punish your children in a frenzy of passion. If necessary, do it reasonably, pitifully. I was sitting by a dying man one evening when I heard a shriek, "Don't, father," followed by an evidently fruitless attempt to escape by a rush across the upper passage. But the blows fell hard and heavily, each one bringing a shiver of pain to the weak frame of the poor sick man, and a chill to my own heart. The father, having exhausted his passion, went out flinging the door after him with a bang that shook the house. I met him a little while after and said, "How could you beat your child so? I thought every bone in his body must be broken." He made excuses, but I saw the reason and he admitted it. He had had just enough drink to upset him, and the least thing aggravated him beyond his own power of control.

Why need you speak coarsely or laugh at the

rough joke which would bring the hot blood to a lady's cheek, and should to that of your wives, daughters, and sisters, but that they are too much accustomed to it? Why need you so often use that dreadful word "*bloody*," which, though you don't think it, takes you back to the sacrifice for sin made on Calvary, where the Lord of Glory, having taken on Him our nature, being made in the likeness of man and for sin, poured out His life-blood to make atonement for us. You apply it to everything, and the same term cannot in reason be expected to apply to quite different things. I heard some lads talking of "bloody Bath buns," and I shuddered at the nastiness of the idea. If you would sometimes think how some of your expressions strike and puzzle those not used to them, and how wrong many of them are in themselves, I think you would watch your tongues a little more, and check yourselves when you are going to use foolish and wrong words. Whenever you tell me any one is "*tight*," I think there must be a screw loose somewhere, or he would not have allowed himself to be reduced to such a deplorable condition. Do not joke about wrong doing, it is playing with edge tools, "let it not be once named among you, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient."

And, oh! how I wish you would break yourselves of swearing. "It is just a habit I've got into, I know it's wrong," is no excuse. It is wrong, indeed, a grievous wrong, and those who are trying to live

for God feel that it is so, and can neither bear to take God's name in vain nor hear others do so. As one told me that when a terrible swearer near whom he had to work gave the rein to his tongue, he got as far off as he could, and repeated hymns to himself that he might not hear and be angered by the sad words. You have no right to scatter "firebrands, arrows, and death" with your tongue; you have no right to do the devil's work with your words any more than you have a right to shoot the next person you come across, or to offer poison instead of pure water to a thirsty child. David says, "I will sing and give praise with the best member that I have. I will keep my mouth with a bridle when the wicked is before me." Let this be your resolve.

In old times when Nehemiah was reforming abuses at Jerusalem, we read that he had to contend with some, who in defiance of God's rules had intermarried with the surrounding heathen nations. God's rules are always wise, and bear directly on our well-being as well as His glory, as we said before. In this case, knowing the influence husbands and wives must exercise over each other, He would have shielded them from the evil; the heathen husband or wife being so likely to draw away the Jewish heart from the worship of God. There is always a *for* or *because*, though He does not see fit always to give us a reason, any more than we do to the children: and we are too much like children, and too fond of saying, "Why? I don't see the use," forgetting that our Father in heaven is "too

wise to err, too good to be unkind ;" and afterwards taught by dearly-bought experience, we wish we had heeded to obey.

By and bye, when families were growing up around them, we read, "Their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people." As the speech of Peter bewrayed him that he was a Galilean, so the speech of these children betrayed them, that they were brought up in an ungodly home. And what of the speech of the children that play about our streets ! What a tale does that tell too often of ungodliness and misrule at home ! You know that children learn much unconsciously, and that they begin to learn long before they begin to talk ; but when they are old enough to talk and act, we see the effects of the lessons they have been learning. Have a care, then, what lessons you are teaching them ; see to it what example you are setting before them, excusing yourselves, it may be, with the thought that it does not matter while they are so little, but that when they grow bigger you will be more careful.

People talk of the innocence of childhood, and what is it ? Like the beautiful bloom on a peach or a plum which the touch of the lightest finger can tarnish ; like the exquisite down of a butterfly's wing which a breath may suffice to damage ; so easily hurt, so equally impossible to repair, as these pencillings of God's finger, is the innocence and simplicity of a little child. And how is this fragile,

delicate thing dealt with? When a little child is taken in its mother's arms to the public-house, or, as it grows older, is sent to fetch the poisonous dram; when a little one is heard repeating only too cleverly the bad language constantly falling on its ears; when I hear mothers calling to their children as "*little devils*," what can I do but shudder and pray? Methinks these are sights and sounds to make the very angels weep over the wreck of happiness in our once fair world.

Oh, be careful of the children! don't let them see or hear what will hurt their precious souls irreparably. Every one of us should do our utmost to try and screen the children from sights and sounds of wrong. Think of the beauty of child life in that lowly home at Nazareth, where the child Jesus was subject unto his earthly parents, and his mother Mary pondered the words spoken, and the things done, and hid them in her heart. Do none of you wish you had been such a child in such a home? Do none of you wish you were a child again, unknowing of much of the evil that makes you sorry now? One man I know often wishes he had died when he was a child, that he might be saved the retrospect of his life. Let this feeling make you watchful of yourselves before the children, and watchful of them to check the very first beginnings of wrong speech and bad habits that will cause such pain and sorrow by and bye if left unchecked.

Remember the speech and manner of the children

betrays its parents, it tells tales good or bad of the home upbringing; and it saddens the heart of the teacher who has been trying to lift the little one into a better atmosphere, to know that it must go back to unlearn holy lessons, to breathe tainted air, and have pure, high, and holy thoughts crushed out, and hateful ones implanted in their stead.


“Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Avoid then the very appearance of evil, “if sinners entice thee, consent thou not;” but strive to imitate Him “who was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,” and of whom His enemies even declared, “Never Man spake like this Man.”

“Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue, keepeth his soul from troubles.” It is difficult as St. James admits: “The tongue can no *man* tame; it is a fire, set on fire of hell.” But what man cannot do the grace of God can; and if you want to break through your bad habit of acting in the spirit of the people of old, “who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own, who is Lord over us?” you must pray as David did, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips.” And “if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.”

VI.

RIGHTS UNCLAIMED.

YOUR Rights ! Do you make as much as you might of your right to the Sunday's rest ? Do you avail yourself of your right to a seat in the parish church, of your right to hear the gospel ? "To the poor is the gospel preached," and you say the churches are for the rich and not for the poor. If, alas ! your excuse that there really would not be room for you all if you all went to church be true, would but the working men of England awake to their rights, and to a deep sense of their privileges in living in a Christian land, this blot of shame would soon be wiped out. You would save your money for the improvement of your houses, and speedily there would be found funds enough and to spare to build churches out of the pennies, the shillings, the pounds now squandered in keeping up the devil's houses in the land. Think for a moment of the awful sum of money which is annually expended on the drink. If those who are always grumbling at the taxes and high prices would but sit down and patiently work



out a simple sum or two, it would be better for them—it would be better for England.

Ah! it is not the want of room that keeps you from church: it is, alas! the force of a bad habit—it is the want of will. For see how a church springs up among a heathen population now turning from darkness to light. As soon as they receive the good news into their heart, “the prayer house” is recognised as a necessity, and all together put shoulder to the wheel to accomplish the work. They determine that a house for the worship of God *must* be built, and each one gives according to his ability, having learnt the words of the Lord Jesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Knowing “the grace of the Lord Jesus, that he for our sakes became poor that we, through his poverty, might be rich,” they esteem no sacrifice too great. Out of their poverty, instead of out of their abundance, they give with lavish hand—labour, time, material, if they have no money to cast into the Lord’s treasury, even the women and children helping, as in Nehemiah’s day. A missionary writes:—“It will not be doing justice if we pass by the exemplary conduct of some of the people. One had to sell some boards which he bought to build his own house to pay his part. When asked why he did that, he replied, ‘It is a mark or sign of ingratitude to receive unbounded blessings from His bounteous hand, and not to forego some earthly comforts for His cause. The Jews in Haggai’s days were punished for neglecting the business of the house

of God, while they dwelt in ceiled houses. Moreover, Jesus said that in His Father's house are many mansions, and I will rather die without a house in this world, and be admitted into one of them, than that my own house should prevent me from doing my part towards God's house.' After the sale of the boards, instead of the 6s. 6d. which was promised, he gave 8s. Another had to sell his bill-hook, because he could not afford to do otherwise and pay something to the church. A third had to defer the building of his own house till he should see the roofing of the church finished, and he spared no pains, among others, to go up and down in the mountains to bring shingles. Many gave more than they had promised." Is not this an example for us? And you only require to be roused up to the need to have your hearts stirred up in the matter. In case of fire or accident, very ready genuine help is always proffered, and if not very systematic, it is easy to make it available; and though it is sometimes easier to work on the spur of the moment, we want you to rise to the occasion, to see that there is deep, real need of your hearty co-operation, and the work will soon be done.

Oh! how Satan tempts, and suits his temptations to the circumstances and character of each unwary soul—any way so that he can keep us out of the right way, or hinder us when we are trying to run in it. As a Bishop of Cadiz said nearly three hundred years ago, "How light is a grain of sand, how small is a drop of rain, how trifling the loss of

a little tile, but see the consequences that result from a great many of these added together! In the early morning the oyster gapes to bask in the sunbeams. Up steals the crab, not boldly advancing, or the shell would close, and the oyster escape or clutch him tight. It takes a little pebble and tosses it in; this prevents the valve from closing. Then he rushes up and devours the oyster at his leisure. Soul of man, just so comes the evil one toward thee, not alluring thee to some sin of horrible deadliness, but flinging a little pebble, a tiny fault, into thy heart; and if thou cast it not from thee at once, but keepest thy heart still unclosed, he obtaineth an entry, and destroyeth thee utterly." Just such a little pebble are the thoughts he puts into your minds and the excuses he puts into your mouths about keeping God's day holy. In the summer, "it is too hot to go to church, and you want to lie down in the fields;" in the winter, "it is too cold, and you must keep the fire warm."

Alas! for the neglect of God's house! How many who go regularly to the theatre, the public-house, or some place of public amusement, never cross the threshold of a church? So many of you tell me you have not been to church for years—not since you were little children in the country home, not since the wedding day. The most assuring answer that I can hope for is, "I go sometimes," when I am often inclined to reply, "Do you eat your breakfast *sometimes*? Then why do you starve your soul?" Do you go to church sometimes, do you

pray sometimes, do you sometimes try against the bad habits? Oh, but these "sometimes" fitful efforts will not take you to heaven, and, I fear, "not yet" will take you to hell. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force"—not natural inherent force, it is true, but implanted by the Holy Spirit: a persistent, steady effort, a determination to cultivate right habits, and habitually to obey God's directions, a following on to know the Lord.

I could hardly have believed it possible that it could be true, that a young man could say to me, "I am twenty-one. I never went to school, for I always ran away if I was sent; and I have never been inside a church in my life. I have been to a meeting now and then, but only to make game of religion." I trust God is now speaking to that young man's heart, but they are terrible words to be spoken in Christian England, and not among the crowded courts of our great cities either. I know that long neglect induces a shrinking. It needs an effort often to do what is right, but the very effort does us good. If a limb is not properly exercised it grows limp and weak, and finally useless; the effort of using it brings the strength. When Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, "Stretch forth thine hand," the man did not say, "I cannot, it has hung useless by my side for years;" he did not say, "People will look at me so if they see me trying to use it;" but he made the effort, and he found that the power was there by the will of the

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Lord. Do you make the effort in the matter of going to church, or breaking through any habit you know to be wrong, and see if, in dependence on God's strength, you do not grow strong to the work.

Do you remember Paul's expression, "Immediately I conferred *not* with flesh and blood?" Too often we leave out the *not*, and find ourselves involved in difficulties. Is it not too often, "I know what I ought to do in this matter, what the Bible and conscience say is right, but others will laugh or miscall me if I do it, they look at you so if you go to church; it is more comfortable to sit by the fire reading the newspaper than to turn out to church on a cold winter's day. I want the rest; I work hard all the week. I must go and see my friends. It is pleasanter to take a walk in the country than to sit cooped up hearing a sermon. I can read my Bible at home, and serve God as well in a walk in the fields." So you can *as well as*, but not *instead of*. All day, and every day, you may be serving Him joyfully, if your work be right, and rightly, truly done for His glory; but so you will also have more of David's spirit, who says, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord," "My soul thirsteth for thee, to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary."

I lately met a man who, with his wife, had come from a country home, and felt "lost-like" in this great city, with no one to care for them. They had been in the habit of going to church regularly in their own

village, yet through all the long months, more than a year, that they had been up, they had not once found their way into a church. Why? Is not the same God ruling and worshipped in town as in the country? "It was all so strange," they said. And with the church bells ringing all round them, they knew not where to go! Their Bible was left in the old home, so they had been getting on as well as they could this weary time without a friend, without a guide. After some little time they bought a Testament, and I left them happier at the thought that that precious book could make them "wise unto salvation."

One man, with whom I used to talk over Sunday duties and privileges, told me he thought it was no good going to church if our minds were full of our weekly plans and business, that often he listened to the conversation of those who were going to and returning from church, and that up to the very door their talk would be of the work or pleasures of the week, and that the moment the service was over they began again. But this again is one of Satan's hindrances. That others make mistakes as to their duty, or their way of doing it, is no excuse for us if we do not try to do ours, and it is no excuse for our neglect of a plain duty, that we, or others, cannot do it as well as we should like to do it. We may often have to pray, "The good Lord pardon every one that prepareth his heart to seek the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary"

(2 Chron. xxx. 18, 19). We may often have to regret the careless spirit in which we have gone to God's house, or the wandering thoughts which have there overtaken us. Too many of us may be like those people, the money-changers and others, whom our Lord chased from the Temple courts, because they were dishonouring God's house by making it a place of merchandise, while pretending they were there to help on the service of God. We may in our hearts be transacting business, thinking over the affairs of the past week, or laying plans for the next. But though the loss is ours, it would be a still greater loss if we were to stay away altogether, because we cannot serve God as well as we wish; something may arrest our attention, and call back our wandering thoughts, and if we determine resolutely to exercise a firm restraint over ourselves, we shall find that, with God's help, we are able to control our thoughts better.

Oh, my friends, why do you turn a deaf ear to the church bells? why pass by the very doors as if the good news there proclaimed had nothing to do with you? Think of Jesus looking down on the noise and confusion of one of our Sundays, when every one might be quietly worshipping God in His house, getting "a lift-up" from the cares of the week, a rest from the toils of the week, a foretaste of heaven. You know, for you have proved it often, some of you—

" A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content,

And health for the toils of the morrow ;
But a Sabbath profaned,
Whate'er may be gained,
Is a *certain forerunner of sorrow.*"

Imagine, I say, the Lord Jesus standing at the church-doors with His look of gentle, reproachful pity, and hear Him say, "' Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow' of unrequited love; the bitter pain borne willingly for you, which you refuse to acknowledge or be grateful for; when, having shown so much love to you, you decline to show your love to Me in reverence for my Day and House." See Him weeping over Jerusalem, saying, " If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." And might He not say this now to the heedless multitudes bent on their own pleasure, rather on their own destruction, that throng our streets instead of God's House on His day? with the sad lament, "I would have gathered thee," I would have taught thee, comforted thee, helped thee, saved thee, "*and ye would not.*" "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life."


I have sometimes thought, that in the expression "Sunday clothes," and the anxiety to be neatly or better dressed than ordinarily on Sunday, we see an unconscious avowal of the homage we owe to God. His day is to be honoured, His House is to be attended, we are to lay aside the business and

cares of the week, to listen to His Word and worship in the more immediate presence of the Great King;—for, as I said just now, day by day, as we do our daily work *well*, be it grand or lowly work; out abroad, battling with the world; head-work or hand-work; or the women's work of "redding up the house," and doing the little necessary fidgeting things that fall to their share; we are emulating the angels "that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word, the ministers of his that do his pleasure;" and work would not be so often "scamped," or wearied over, if we remembered this, and set this aim before us. Let us therefore strive to do Him honour by all means. And though I have often to combat the excuse as to Sunday clothes, when pleaded for non-attendance at God's house, or any place where His Word is to be heard, yet I honour the feeling, in so far as it is right, although it is a mixed one perhaps made up of pride and many false motives. I perceive always that one fruit of real religion is a more careful attention to neatness and cleanliness, and that the excuse generally dies away as the determination to do right grows. As to the excuse, "I have no clothes fit for church," I can only say, "Is not the life more than meat and the body than raiment?" and entreat you not to deprive your soul of life, of food, of clothing,—which you may hear about if not get by attending God's house,—because you fear your fellow creatures will look down upon you, seeing that your clothes are not as good as theirs.

I have never forgotten what one man said, when

I was trying vainly to induce him to go to church. He had made a little fortune in the Crimea, but it had done him no good, and his Sunday things were "put away." However he had on a beautifully clean white slop, so I said that would do very nicely, looking cool and comfortable for the summer; reminding him, at the same time, that God looked at the heart, and that the clothes were, after all, not of so much importance. "No," he said, "it's a clean inside that is wanted." Alas, he would not try to get it though! Some years after we suddenly came across each other again, and he recognised me immediately. He was married now, and a sorry time his wife often had of it. She listened to my exhortations, and often came to a service held expressly for those employed with him; but I could not persuade him to accompany her. At length he promised he would do so. I had not the faintest idea that he would keep his word. He did, however; but I was inexpressibly shocked to see how. The drink was his bane, and I saw the instant he appeared that he had had too much. He was fortunately quiet, and slept soundly through nearly the whole service. Poor S.! has he tried yet for the "clean inside," I wonder!


Sometimes it is a feeling of shame that keeps you back; you know if it had not been for self-indulgence, or carelessness, it may be long years before, or through a long course of years, you would be able to make as respectable an appearance as your neighbours. We often have to look for the cause of some



effect in very out-of-the-way or unsuspected places. Long years ago you made a false step; you are feeling the folly and bitterness of it now. Very likely the Sunday things are "safe;" but why were they put away? It is *very seldom* that sickness or want of work is the *first* cause of trouble; you must look for that elsewhere. What about the money that was flung recklessly away, with open hand, treating every one that passed by, as if it was to last for ever; the pounds spent like farthings, after some successful piece of work; the money wasted after coming from the Crimea, or running the American blockade; or hardly won under the burning sun of India, or in the unhealthy climate of the Brazils, or in fear of the cholera in Turkey, to be squandered immediately on the return home? What even about the regular good wages of the time when work was good, and provisions were cheap, which were then frittered away? Ah! some of you would give anything now, for some of that "substance wasted in riotous living!" But though some of you tell me that you have learned lessons by experience, I see you doing the same thing over and over again; *picking yourselves up* in some marvellous way, only to slip back again, because you are trying to do the work by and for yourselves.

Many of you think that, because you have not large incomes, it does not matter how you spend your money,—that, because there is not much of it, there is not the least need for keeping accounts; but I wish you would. You forget "the power of

littles." Many of you would take care of the pounds, if you had them, but you leave the pence to take care of themselves. I wish you would calculate how much those pennies would come to, those half-pennies or even farthings (often given to stop them from teasing, and so bad every way), which the children spend on sweets and trash. (Alas, that it should often be on Sunday too, on their way to or from school, where they are taught how to keep God's commandment concerning His day). It does not take long to put down accounts, and it looks well to see all nicely set down; and then you see exactly how you are getting on, and can compare the prices of things at different times, and your expenditure at different times also. But it would not look very well, if all the items on which money is now wasted were honestly put down. Would not some of you be rather ashamed to see how much money was put into the pipe and smoked in the course of the year? Just the few pence a-week, which surely you may indulge yourself with! Or spent in the extra and unnecessary half-pints, or the one glass with a friend now and then. Sit down and count up these pennies for one year, or half-a-dozen years back, and I think you would be obliged to say, "I am sorry." I do not want to see a miserly spirit. I know that in these times it is sometimes a terribly hard struggle to get on at all; therefore I want to see you lessen the difficulty. I want you to see that there are two sides to every question. I daresay you have read the story, "Take care of your



"Tis Buts," and I should like you each to consider whether you are taking care of them, and what is their cost if you are not.

Too many of us "muddle away the money" as the saying is, don't know where it goes, but it is gone. Now if we rigidly, determinedly, kept accounts, putting down every farthing spent, we should soon see where it goes. One item of expenditure I would do away with at once, the interest on things "put away." If I were an autocrat, and had the power, I think I should sweep away *all* the pawnbroker's shops. If I could do away with them I might yet leave one or two public-houses for those who *fancy* they need them, but I would not leave *one* pawnbrokers' shop to entrap those who are hesitating into the snare under the pretence of a benefit. You might think it rather hard at first not to be able to get a little ready money at the moment you need it, but I believe you would all thank me as a benefactor in the end. You know the whole system is bad, and you constantly tell me you wish there were no such things as pawnshops and tickets, and that you had never been tempted to think they were good. I have no doubt that it often prevents the exercise of a little wholesome self-denial, to think that you can at once get just the sum of money you want for something, or some excursion perhaps, that you can very well do without; nay, would be much better without. It is a wretched system to be always putting in and taking out things. And then the time comes when it is not so

easy to take them out as to put them in, and the little excitement grows into a heart-sickness, as the more you really want the money the harder bargain will the broker drive with you. And then you might almost as well buy new things, if you come to look at it all round, and see the time wasted and the wear of shoe leather in those unprofitable walks, and the interest to be paid if you mean to keep the things in your own name. When the pinch is hard to bear, it grieves me to hear, "it went for bread;" and it troubles me much that very often one of the first things that goes is *the wedding ring*. I should have thought a true wife would rather have had her finger cut off than part with her wedding-ring, but I wonder how many ringless fingers I know, and how many wedding-rings are "in for half-a-crown!" (O how I wish that all the fingers that are encircled with a bit of gold had a *right* to wear the wedding-ring!)

It matters not whether it is five hundred pounds or five hundred pence that we have, we are equally accountable for its right use. We are stewards, be our trust large or small. You remember the man in the parable who had rightly used his one pound was commended because he had "been faithful in a very little," and he who had misused his was condemned because he had wrongly judged about its use and value. "Occupy till I come," is the exhortation, whether much or little, and methinks the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things,"—"faithful in a

very little"—"enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," will be very sweet to weary hearts that have been toiling anxiously, wearily enough perhaps, with no hope or thought of *reward*, but only with the simple desire to do the Lord's will in every circumstance of life.

I have often been vexed to see how little comfort you get out of your hard earnings, just because so many of you want a little management. I watched a husband and wife for years. I could not find out that either drank; indeed, the husband seemed, as far as I could see, an honest sort of man, anxious to do right and willing to work, but always depressed, though they had no children to keep them down. They had two or three pull-backs, by reason of his falling out of work, and other causes, and she was not in good health, but still I could not make out the wretchedness I constantly saw. I thought there must be bad management somewhere, and I have now found out what I suspected. The wife is such a thriftless little thing that the money goes no way in her hands; as soon as it comes it is gone, and too often spent in recklessness on some expensive article of dress for herself, or food, of which they ought to have said, "I can and will do without it till I have got up some little way again."

Too often the money burns till it is spent again, and the pleasure of exercising self-denial as to spending it on things not actually necessary is foregone. I like you to have pretty things about you, bright things to please the children; but the

useful should always come before the *useless* prettiness; and if we are strictly economical we shall generally find that we can have both the useful and ornamental. The ugly pictures of prize-fighters, &c., &c., that I see on some of your walls are quite an eye-sore to me, and I should like to see them replaced by some of the very pretty ones, published by different societies very cheaply on purpose for you. You may say, "It is all very well for you to talk, you do not know what the pinch of poverty is." Perhaps not. But I do know, and most of us know, what it is to have to say very often—of something that we have set our heart upon, or that seems really necessary—not only "I *can* do without it," but "I *must* do without it," if such a poor family is to be helped, such books are to be bought to lend, or such a thing is to be done.

When you complain or tell me of anything, I always try to put myself in your position for the moment, as I know things look different according to the different ways in which we look at them. It is so as to the things we see with our bodily eyes. At times our eyes seem to deceive us, as is the case in a fog, through which an object that we know bears a different shape in the bright sunshine, looms large and distorted. It is foolish to persist a thing is, or is not, what we think, unless we have good grounds for thinking so. This is amusingly illustrated in a little piece of poetry describing the way in which some men who had seen a chameleon pertinaciously held each to his own opinion as to its colour, each

being right according to the circumstances under which he had seen it, and not making allowance for those under which the rest had done so. As is often said, "I've seen, and sure I ought to know."

"Two travellers of such a cast,
As o'er Arabia's wilds they past,
And on their way in friendly chat
Now talked of this and now of that,
Discoursed awhile, 'mongst other matter,
Of the chameleon's form and nature.
'A stranger animal,' cries one,
'Sure never lived beneath the sun !
A lizard's body lean and long,
A fish's head, a serpent's tongue ;
Its foot with triple claw disjoined
And what a length of tail behind !
How slow its pace ! and then its hue—
Who ever saw so fine a blue ?'
'Hold there !' the other quick replies,
'Tis green ; I saw it with these eyes,
As late with open mouth it lay
And warmed it in the sunny ray ;
Stretched at its ease the beast I viewed,
And saw it eat the air for food.'
'I've seen it, sir, as well as you,
And must again affirm 'tis blue ;
At leisure I the beast surveyed
Extended in the cooling shade.'
'Tis green, 'tis green, sir, I assure ye.'
'Green,' cries the other in a fury,
'Why, sir, d'ye think I've lost my eyes ?'
'Twere no great loss,' the friend replies,
'For if they always serve you thus
You'll find them but of little use.'
So high at last the contest rose
From words they almost came to blows ;
When luckily passed by a third,
To him the question they referred,

And begged he'd tell them, if he knew,
 Whether the thing was green or blue.
 'Sirs,' cries the umpire, 'cease your pother,
 The creature's neither one nor t'other.
 I caught the animal last night
 And viewed it o'er by candle light ;
 I marked it well ; 'twas black as jet.
 You stare ; but, sirs, I've got it yet,
 And can produce it.'—'Pray, sir, do ;
 I'll lay my life the thing is blue.'
 'And I'll be sworn, that when you've seen
 The reptile, you'll pronounce it green.'
 'Well then, at once to ease the doubt,'
 Replies the man, 'I'll let him out,
 And when before your eyes I've set him
 If you don't find him black, I'll eat him.'
 He said : then full before their sight
 Produced the beast, and lo ! *'twas white !*
 Both stared : the man looked wondrous wise :
 'My children,' the chameleon cries,
 (Then first the creature found a tongue),
 'You all are right, and all are wrong,
 When next you talk of what you view,
 Think others see as well as you ;
 Nor wonder if you find that none
 Prefers your eye-sight to his own.'''

Near the pretty little village of Grasmere rises a bluff low hill, a steep climb ; set by itself on a plain, it would be almost a little mountain, but here among the mountains it is only Helm Crag. The jagged rocks at the top appear to fall into a perfect shape when seen from a little distance cutting the clear sky ; as we frequently imagine shapes in the clouds, and figures or faces in the outlines of the mountains, which hardly two people see alike. There was one mountain in Scotland, which we saw

from our home near Loch Tay, which always looked to me like a sphinx (lying down, however), calmly contemplating the heavens, but I daresay no one else would have seen the resemblance. And this Helm Crag is said by some to have the appearance of an old woman seated on the summit, while others declare that it is a lion. And the fact is, that from one side the piled-up rocks look like the one, while from the other side they appear to be the other. And so in listening to people, it is well to remember that their point of view may be quite different from ours, and it is well to go if possible to theirs, that we may see for ourselves how things look to them, and then, if we can, take them to our point of view, and show them how the same things look to us. And if, as sometimes happens, we cannot see things alike, do not let us miscall one another for our inability, but if it is a grave matter of real importance, just refer it to God, saying, "That which I see not, teach thou me," and ask Him to give us "a right judgment in all things," and the life will go easier with us, even down to the money matters.

Half-way up a mountain we see things very differently from the way in which we see them either at the foot or at the top. Amid the smoke and confusion of a battle it is difficult to a looker-on, or to one engaged in the thick of the fight, to see the exact plan on which the general who has forecast it all is acting, or to decide which way the fortune is going, which side shall win the day.

So when we are half-way up the Hill Difficulty

we can neither see to the top nor the bottom sometimes, nor things in their right places around us; we know not how we are going. Or, in the din and confusion of the battle of life, we may be deceived by defective vision or mistaken calculation, we cannot tell how things are going, but the Captain of our Salvation is watching the fight, our Master knows all about it, and all we can do then is to trust His power and guidance.

“ Take it on trust a little while,
Soon shalt thou learn the mystery right,
In the full sunlight of His smile.”

Do not arrive at wrong conclusions, because you *will* start from wrong premises. Do not think things must be right or wrong, because you, looking at them from your own point of view (and that very likely a wrong one), see them so. There is a right and a wrong way of looking at everything, and we must not be perverse and insist that ours is the only right way, ours the only right point of view; but we must strive to look at everything honestly, turning it round every way with an unprejudiced eye, looking in the way God looks at it. Remember that He sees the end from the beginning, and that everything is tending to one end, His glory, and to the furtherance of the fulfilment of the prayer, “Hallowed be thy name! thy kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”

There was a man I often used to visit who perplexed me sorely by his persistently one-sided views. Soon after my first introduction to him he

declined having books to read; "they had not time." However, I was loth to let the thin end of the wedge get out after it had once got in, and suggested that I had a variety to suit all tastes, and he might please himself, which fortunately he did, and we became very good friends. My influence with him rarely prevailed to get him out to church or a reading, but if I would go and sit with them an hour, if I could spare the time, I was always very welcome. My friend was a shrewd Yorkshireman (as his nickname told me), and took a good deal of care of his girls, which I was glad to see, but he would not use his shrewdness in the right direction. He would puzzle himself by looking at things from a wrong point of view, or from one side only, and consequently he continually thought everything was going wrong—government, work, wages, society, everything. His idea was that the country was kept in order half by the soldiers, half by the clergymen, though "he would not work for a curate's pay." This I told him was an admission, and that I wanted that every one should keep themselves in order by the rules of the clergymen, or rather by the rules of their God, submitting themselves to the gospel of the grace of God, and then there would not be such disorder as there is. I used to beg him sometimes to read two different newspapers, the editors of which took opposite sides of the same question, and then to try and sift out for himself a medium view. He was very tolerably contented *notwithstanding*, and thought it was not much use

troubling, as by and bye things would right themselves.

But the worst was, that, not understanding God, he often maligned Him, and could not think why He let this or that happen. There were "so many religions" he could not tell which was the right. Sometimes he would get as far as "Well, if you put it that way, I see what you mean," after I had been trying to make him see from my stand-point, and, if so be possible, from God's starting-point; and I would begin to hope he would be convinced, when, to my disappointment, he would finish up with, "But after all I can't see it so." Poor C., so genial and hearty he was, I was sorry when he returned the books for the last time, as they were obliged to leave for other work, and sorry that I had not been able to make him see the truth of the things "which make for peace."

Another man who could not understand the "block" there seemed to be on the line of life, thought things were never going to get straight, that there are a great many, too many, people in England, and he wished there would be a revolution, or something to kill off half of them. He never stopped to suppose that he might be among the half he wished got rid of. I was sorry for him. He was tired of looking for work, having been a little sort of master in his time, but rather unfortunate, not having placed his account in the bank of faith. These things look sad written down, and I just write them that you may think them over.

and ask God to make you see rightly, speak rightly, and wait patiently.

“ Life is real, life is earnest,
And things are not what they seem.”

Each one of us, from the highest to the lowest, has to work out for himself and herself the problem, “ My life, and what shall I do with it ; my talents, and how shall I use them ; my time, and how shall I make the most of it ; my money, and how shall I spend it ; my circumstances, and how shall I bear myself in them, so that they may lift me up towards heaven instead of crushing me down hopelessly ? ” Each one *for* himself, but not *by* himself. For the problem is never solved, the question never satisfactorily answered, till we have studied it at the feet of Jesus—till we have said,

“ Here, Lord, I give myself to Thee,
My strength, my life, my guardian be,
My earthly days thus let me spend,
Till time, and life, and being end,”—

till we can say, “ Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” “ Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord ? ” That done, all falls into its proper place ; but, till it is done, there is no rest, no peace, no real happiness, no real turning over of the new leaf, no possibility of real improvement.

It is not a man's circumstances, but himself in *them*, *that* is the question. I sometimes wish, for

myself and others, that we could begin all over again. I should like to take one and another that I know, who now seem hopelessly crushed by heavy burdens by the effect of one false step after another, and put them in a position to make a fresh start. I should like to shake them free from their difficulties, their fears, putting them down somewhere away from all the old influences, tempting companions, haunting recollections, just to give them a chance, as we say, and see how they would get on. What, then, could I so succeed in making a Utopia ?

Well, if I cannot do what I want, I would at least do this : I would give you a secret by which you may test all around—"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." I would make you armour-proof, so that you may walk unscathed amid all the fiery darts of the devil. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." I would give you the power of retiring into a refuge from the strife of tongues. "Thou art my rock and my fortress, be thou my strong habitation." "His children shall have a place of refuge." I would give you a spring of life and joy which should raise you above all the depressing power of circumstances. "Christ in you the hope of glory." "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." I would show you that "all

things work together for good to them that love God." And, so living, you would ever be comforting yourselves with the promise, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." And ever would the pleading go up, "Make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight;" "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts;" "Grant that, like as we do believe the Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we may in heart and life thither ascend, and with him continually dwell." Then for you will this benediction sweetly sound forth, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a *right* to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Oh, I want you all to claim that *right*, to determine that it shall be yours! "Not by works of righteousness which we have done," but of His free grace and favour working in us "to will and to do of His good pleasure," having "made us accepted in the Beloved," may we plead and claim that right. The right of redemption and of inheritance being His in whom we are "hid," who said, "Deliver him from going down into the pit, I have found a ransom," the price of the redemption being not "corruptible things, as silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ." And though, "until the redemption of the purchased possession," we may sometimes go a little wearily, we have the earnest of the *inheritance* in the Spirit's help and sealing of the

promised *right* to our souls, to our unspeakable comfort and strengthening for any warfare or service to which we may be called ; so,

“Though the way may be rough, it cannot be long,
And we'll gild it with hope, and cheer it with song,”

till that He calls us into “His presence in glory”
“to go no more out.”

Your rights ! Yes, I wish you would stand up for your rights, as you say ; only be sure that they are your rights. If you would look at your rights and wrongs from God's point of view, you would find that one is often put for the other, and we should not hear so much about either ; but we should see more patience in bearing wrongs which can't be cured all in a minute, more earnest following the example of the blessed Saviour, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself.” We should see more patient determination to do the right, or to set right what may-be has gone all wrong while you have been idly or wildly contending for your rights.

And ever to be borne in mind is our right of free access to God, our reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, Who has opened the way for us, so that, as helpless children, we may ever be looking up to Him, to be guided by His eye who ruleth over all, and directs and controls all for His own glory and the good of His children. “Let us, therefore, come

boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in "every "time of need."

" There are briars besetting every path
Which call for patient care,
There is a thorn in every lot,
And an earnest need for prayer ;
But the patient heart that leans on thee
Is happy anywhere."

VII.

SLAVES AND FREEMEN ; WITH A WORD ABOUT SPIDERS' WEBS.

DOES it not surprise you, when you sit down carefully to weigh the matter, that men who pride themselves on their independence should yet be such *slaves* to habit, public opinion, what others say, &c. &c., should be content to let the tyrant Satan lead them captive at his will? You sing, "Britons never shall be slaves," but is it true?

We rouse up indignantly at the bare idea of our land being conquered by a foreign foe. But, alas! how do we lie passive under the hand of a cruel tyrant. Though ready to say with the Jews of old, "We were never in bondage to any man," Christ's reply to them holds true for us, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John viii. 34); but if only the degradation be felt and writhed under, He is at hand to deliver. For He bare this testimony concerning Himself, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." "And when he had

opened the book," in the synagogue at Nazareth, "he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." Having read this as the text of His first sermon, He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv. 17, 18, 20). Dear friends, if you have not proved the blessedness of this fulfilment in your own happy experience, do not delay another moment to search and see why, if there is a deliverer, you are still in bondage, groaning in misery, Satan's slaves, when you might be the Lord's freemen.

There is a sad sight to be seen oftentimes, people toying with their bonds. You will say that cannot be; none but a madman could be so foolish. True, we do not see a man playing with or parading his handcuffs, but rather trying to hide them if he cannot wrench them off. But, alas! "fools make a mock at sin;" and too often do we see the "sinners against their own souls" parading the fetters that Satan has clasped round their feet to hinder them from running in the way of God's commandments; laughing over the sins and bad habits that are bands wherewith they are bound by the mighty tyrant, the strong man armed who has led them captive at his will; not ashamed to be seen the worse for drink, boasting of their evil deeds.

Oh, friends, where is your pride, where is your

nature's nobility, of which we sometimes hear so much? Alas, alas! these avail nothing—are but like birds that beat their wings against the bars of their cage, when we try *by ourselves* to raise and free ourselves. Look at the miserable homes, the squandered money, the wasted lives that you and I know of. *What is the cause?*

I want to rouse you nevertheless to a sense of the degradation, that you may desire to escape these trammels, that by and bye you may say, "The snare is broken, and I am escaped." It does not matter what the trammels are; whether it be a silken cord or an iron chain that binds us, is not the question, but whether we are bound at all. It does not matter that you can say, I am not so bad as such an one, I do not drink much, I keep to my work, and never interfere with anybody; the question is, Have you discovered that you are bound, that you are bad, that the word is quite true, "There is none that doeth good, no not one." Have you felt the *plague* of your own heart? Do you writhe under the power of some bad habit that you would give anything to break through?

We all admire a person possessed of a strong will and an earnest heart bent on overcoming difficulties. We know for ourselves the pleasure of accomplishing a piece of work, spite of difficulties and prognostications that all our pains were of no avail, and that we were but wasting time.

About four hundred years ago lived a man whose story shows us what can be done by a brave heart.

and undaunted will. Quentin Matsys was the son of a blacksmith, and followed his father's trade, but having an artistic turn, he became a celebrated worker in iron, while yet very young. It is said that his fellow-workmen were so jealous of his skill that they often tried to hinder him in his work, and injure his standing with his master, and that on one occasion when he was engaged on a particular piece of work, they hid his hammer and file, that he might not be able to finish it. His spirit was roused to determination, and, in despite of the hindrance, he succeeded to their amazement. He had met a young girl whom he wished to make his wife, but her father was an artist, and would not allow his daughter to marry, as he thought, beneath her. The young man grew hopeful instead of hopeless, and he determined to raise and make himself worthy of her. So he left his home and studied hard; and the artistic genius being there already, he returned at length a successful man, to claim the artist's daughter as an artist's wife. Specimens of his work, as an ironworker and as a painter, are still to be seen in the city of Antwerp (where most of his life was passed) and elsewhere.

In 1671 was born Peter the Great, who was to effect a great change in the manners and customs and laws of the Russians. As he grew up he found himself ignorant, and set about improving himself. He perceived that his great country was not taking its proper place among the nations of Europe, and was shut into itself partly because it had no fleet;

so he determined that one should be formed at once. He visited the dockyards in Holland and England, and not only so, but actually worked in them, that he might gain the necessary insight into the subject. The capital of Russia at that time was Moscow, far inland, and not at all suited to his views of making his country a commercial kingdom. So he fixed on a spot at the mouth of the river Neva on which to build a city to be called by his own name. It did not matter to him that it was "a miserable morass, liable to be flooded by the waters of the Gulf of Finland, without building materials of any kind, in a barren soil, in a cold climate. His indomitable resolution overcame these difficulties, and, under his marvellous energies, a splendid city rose on that dreary marsh."

Look at Stephenson, who, by force of self-contained, earnest purpose, accomplished so much, who would not be put down, but persevered in carrying out his plans. You have heard what a difficulty there was, for instance, in laying the line over Chat Moss. Money, time, material, thought, all seemed wasted; the sinking soil swallowed up everything that was laid on it. But Stephenson was not the man to give in because of difficulty. He was not to be daunted. No matter that taunts were showered upon him, and that there was nothing apparently before him but complete failure. He shut himself up for three days to face the difficulty and think it out, and came forth with the presage of victory over his opponents and the stub-

born materials, animate and inanimate, that he had to deal with.

Look at Napoleon Buonaparte. See what he accomplished by the force of an iron will that would give way to nothing, but bowed or broke everything that opposed, till he at last, having done a great work for God, though he blindly thought it was for himself, was permitted to go no farther, and had to succumb to a stronger will, even that of the Ruler of all. Many more we might mention, and many more you will have read of in public or in private life, who have carried all before them by sheer determination and perseverance unto the end. You will recollect there is a reverse to this picture in the history of many in the past, and of many whose lives are being lived out before you, who have failed, and are failing, because they have lacked this brave earnestness, who let a difficulty unnerve and conquer them, because they had not the right stuff in them, and did not care to get it, which would enable them to fight their way through.

And you have read of One who never swerved from His purpose. Foes derided Him, friends disowned Him; "He is beside himself," they said, but "He set his face like a flint" through all. "He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem." So determined was He that He exclaimed, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished." He was ever writing out in His life the words spoken in prophecy, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God," "I am content, I delight to

do thy will"—to do it as it had never been done before, as it has never been done since. With a fortified will He endured untold misery all His life, and the sharpest possible pain in His death. He paused not in His momentous work until at length the cry was heard from the cross, "It is finished: and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost." Then was seen what perfect love and a perfect unflinching will can do in working out a purpose. And because of that lovely steadfastness we now also can "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." And in that earnestness of purpose which carried our Lord through His work on earth, we have a blessed pattern set before us for imitation.

Now if you can respect and admire a perfect character, governed and controlled in all things by the force of a strong energetic will; why cannot you determine, I will be such, I will no longer be a waverer drifting hither and thither, one while strong, another while weak: now making headway, now buffeted back by the surging waves of circumstance or temptation?

There are many who so determine and yet they fail still; why? Because they think they can mend themselves; can reform themselves; can govern themselves. Because they think they are strong, and they have yet to learn that their strength is utter weakness. "Unstable as water thou shalt not excel." But make up your minds that the work is to be done, and that you cannot do it, and go to be

taught and strengthened by the Spirit of God, and you may say, "When I am weak, then am I strong. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Times without number men have said to me, "I know I'm wrong, I will not do it again, I will turn over a new leaf." I am glad to hear thus much; but I know there is many a bitter lesson to be learned before the new leaf is fairly turned over. And when in answer to my warning the reply is, as so often, "I can keep myself;" I am the more anxious in watching, fearing a sad slip back will be the next experience. For too often you will not *begin at the beginning*. You think a patch up of the life will satisfy your conscience and your God, as it satisfies the world's eye. "Let men resolve never so strongly against sin, yet it will creep again into their favour, till the love of sin be quenched in the heart, and this fire will never die of itself; the love of Christ must quench the love of sin."

Talking with a carpenter one day, he had many objections to make as to our being able to live by God's rules. At last I said, "God's law is straight, and our will is perverted. You would not attempt to nail a warped, crooked piece of wood to a straight piece, and then throw away the *straight* piece as useless because you could not make them fit to each other." "No," he said, "we must put the crooked piece in the sun to draw the warp out, and then it would go against the straight."

God speaks of "a perverse and crooked generation, a very froward generation, children in whom is

no faith ;" " a crooked and perverse nation." He says of those born into the world that, " they are estranged, they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies ;" that " they have made themselves crooked paths." As to God's laws and His requirements, and their obligations, they deceive themselves and speak deceitfully. So the carpenter's speech is a parable for us. We too must be put in the sun to have the warp taken out, the perversion cured. We must feel the effect of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness ; we must come to the Light to have our deeds made manifest. We must come to Jesus just as we are ; and the love and power of sin being broken in our hearts ; the guilt and pollution of sin being done away for us by the atoning sacrifice and cleansing blood of Christ ; " every thought being brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ ;" then we can say, " I have done iniquity, I will do so no more, for the love of Christ constraineth me, and His commandments are not grievous." Then will our will be toward God, instead of running counter to His, and we shall rejoice to know that in His hand all that is " crooked " in ourselves and others in the world around " shall be made straight." " For we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Is it so ? Take courage, then, fainting spirit ; there may be many a struggle, many a fearful conflict, much " hard fighting with old foes," but the issue is certain. " The

Lord will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy endureth for ever, forsake not the work of thine own hands," was the utterance with which "David encouraged himself in his God." One time he did say, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul," but in deep despondency he could comfort himself with communing with his God. "Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? hope thou in God, my Helper, my Redeemer."

Remember, though you may not seem to yourselves to be getting on, God is watching you, weighing the spirit, and knowing the exact state of each one. And, though at the end of the day you may think you are not much further on than in the morning, it is something if you have not lost ground, and perhaps you may be encouraged by looking back a week, a month, or a year. A poor man who was engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with many foes, feared he was not getting on at all, and began to think it was no use trying any more. He confided his fears to a friend who had taken an interest in him, and who was happy in thinking that the victory was sure, as he trusted there was a work of God in the poor man's heart. The difficulties were great, however. He had not only to struggle against temptation for himself, but he was sorely tried by seeing his wife give way to it. He said that to avoid contention when his wife was the worse for drink, he passed the night outside the door or the window. "And what would you have done a year ago?" was the inquiry. "I should have

kicked her downstairs," was the reply, from which the encouraging thought was drawn that, by God's grace, he was better able to control his temper than last year, and he was bidden to look up and look on hopefully. "Faint yet pursuing."

I told this little incident to one who was in the thick of the fight, but who, after keeping sober for months, failed at last. "Through his wife," he said. "Through mistrusting God," I said. "It was very hard," was his comment. Yes, it was very hard; but depend upon it that man was happier in the fight against sin than he had ever been standing at ease under Satan's orders.

My friends, are you struggling against your bad habits, longing to overcome them, yet often sorely bestead and weary with what seems to you an almost vain struggle? Do not grow hopeless, do not ever be tempted to give in; the more desperate the fight the greater will be the joy of victory; the more wearisome the journey, the sweeter the rest in the Father's house, when the armour is laid aside, and the toil is done with for ever.

"Who seeks in weakness an excuse,
His sins will vanquish never."

"In what the world calls weakness, lurks
The very strength of evil,
Full mightily it helps the works
Of our great foe the devil."

Don't say you can't get on, you can't conquer this or that bad habit, or shake off those old ways and tempting friends; say, I will. And don't say

in vain confidence I, by myself I, can and and will do it, but say, "So help me God," in assured confidence of the truth of His word, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

"Strong is the strength from Thee that flows,
We mourn not lack of powers."

There is one thing that weighs heavily on my mind, and which I do wish you would, for yourselves and for others, most carefully consider. It is the terrible, the untold misery which results from the drinking habits which prevail, and I want you to think how this can be mitigated, and how you may shake yourselves free from the thralldom and the consequences of the foolish customs, and the light thoughts concerning this, which is to so many such a terrible temptation and such a bitter snare.

Some have said that there should be no laws as to the restriction of the sale of intoxicating liquors, that people should be a law unto themselves. When I was groaning once over the increasing number of public-houses, a policeman said, "Men should contain themselves better. They should not go into the public-house to drink." (His idea was that they should get their beer direct from the brewery. Truly I wish this were possible, there would then not be so much drunkenness from adulteration. But in the present state of your houses it would not be possible to keep beer good in even a small quantity, and perhaps the time is not arrived when brewers generally could or would

sell to daily consumers, though I am glad to find that some do). Of course, I said "quite true," but when I went on to say, "How about the flies getting into the spiders' web?" there was no answer. I always think the fine attractive gin-palaces and public-houses are to foolish souls what the beautifully spun spider's webs are to the poor flies, and the child's poem about the "Spider and the Fly" may be taken as an allegory.

" 'Will you walk into my parlour?' said the spider to the fly,
'Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy,
The way into my parlour is up a winding stair,
And I've many curious things to show you when you're there.'

" 'Oh, no, no,' said the little fly, 'to ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair can ne'er come down again ;'
'I'm sure you must be weary with searing up so high,
Will you rest upon my little bed?' said the spider to the fly.

" 'There are pretty curtains drawn around, the sheets are fine
and thin,
And if you like to rest awhile I'll snugly tuck you in.'
'Oh, no, no,' said the little fly, 'for I have heard it said,
They never wake again who sleep upon your bed.'

" 'Said the cunning spider to the fly, 'Dear friend, what can I do,
To prove the warm affection I've always felt for you,
I have within my pantry good store of all that's nice,
I'm sure you're very welcome—will you please to take a slice.'

" 'Oh, no, no,' said the little fly, 'kind sir, that cannot be,
I've heard what's in your pantry, and I do not wish to see.'
'Sweet creature,' said the spider, 'you're witty and you're wise,
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your
eyes.

" 'I have a little looking-glass upon my parlour shelf,
If you'll step in one moment you shall behold yourself.'

'Thank you, gentle sir,' she said, 'for what you're pleased to say,
And bidding you good morning now, I'll call another day.'

"The spider turn'd him round about, and went into his den,
For well he knew the silly fly would soon come back again;
So he wove a subtle web in a little corner sly,
And set his table ready to dine upon the fly.

"Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing,
'Come hither, hither, pretty fly, with the pearl and silver wing.
Your robes are green and purple, there's a crest upon your head;
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as
lead.'

"Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little fly,
Hearing his wily flattering words, came slowly flitting by;
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue—

"Thinking only of her crested head, poor foolish thing! at last
Up jump'd the cunning spider, and he fiercely held her fast.
He dragg'd her up his winding stair, into his dismal den,
Within his little parlour—but she ne'er came out again!

"And now, dear little children, who may this story read,
To idle, silly, flattering words, I pray you ne'er give heed,
Unto an evil counsellor, close heart, and ear, and eye,
And take a lesson from this tale of the spider and the fly."

To which may be added—

And now, dear friends, you know better than I can say
All that there is of sorrow, when you to drink give way;
You think "the public's" pleasant, and gay, and warm, and
bright,
But there's another side to all which you cannot see to-night.

There is an under tone of sorrow to all that merry noise,
And an after taste of bitter to those maddening so-call'd joys;
I would have you look before you enter to see God's "woe"
written there,
This is a gate that leads to hell for all it looks so fair.

Here is *the evil counsellor*, here Satan lies in wait,
For unstable and unwary souls he holds a tempting bait ;
But listen now, my friends, to the gentle pleading tone,
Oh, shun these vile temptations, and now your danger own.

Here is " the mirth of fools " that dieth soon away,
But I'll tell you of a real joy that lasteth on for aye ;
Fulness of pleasure there at God's right hand on high,
Then to the joys of earth ' *close heart, and ear, and eye.* '

Turn from these follies, turn, nor linger nor delay,
Avoid the way of sinners, turn from it, pass away ;
You know you're safe only as you avoid the snare,
You know your danger's great, oh, then, my friends, *beware !*

Lest at the last you mourn with bitter wild regret,
Because the feet so hopelessly are tangled in the net ;
Yet you may break the snare, and safety find in flight ;
God give you strength and courage to begin this very night !

I often think these words are true, " I never see a sign ' licensed to sell spirits,' without thinking it is a license to ruin souls. Public-houses are the yawning avenues to poverty and rags in this life, and, as one has said, *the short cut to hell.* "

I was glad to get the opinion of some working men as to prohibitory measures, or restriction in the number of public-houses in a given district. One who thinks a good deal in his own way, and often tolerably shrewdly, declared that it was a great shame that Sir Wilfrid Lawson's bill was not allowed and passed. He was sure that the misery of the working classes resulted from their drinking habits, and argued that temptation ought to be taken out of their way. He was also sure that all working men would have given their vote for the

bill. It had been put to the vote where he worked, and out of a large number of men there was but one dissentient voice. He was of opinion that, if it were only allowed to be in operation for six months in London only, the working men would not know themselves, they would be so much better off that they would petition for a further trial.

We make fences around our fields to warn trespassers—we put a fence at the edge of a road overhanging a precipice—we recognise the need for it. We put parapets to bridges, so that stumbling, short-sighted passengers may not fall over. We hoist danger-signals at a given spot to warn curious or careless passers-by that if they venture on it is at their peril. We put a guard round a fire in a room in which there are a number of infants, attracted by the warmth and pretty glow, and incapable of taking care of themselves, or of judging the amount of injury that would accrue to them if allowed to indulge their wish to take hold of the fire. So it seems to me that laws are needful as fences; and God has fenced round many sins with “Thou shalt not.” A broken leg is set in splints and bandages till the bone has reunited, and crutches are needed for some time till it is strong enough to trust to. And who is so foolish as to refuse the use of crutches? In due time the bandages may be removed, and the crutches thrown aside. So by and bye we may be able to do without helps and fences and laws, but not now. The teaching of the New Testament is that “Love is the fulfilling of the law;”

but the Lord does not do away with the Old Testament laws; rather He constantly reminded His hearers of the need of keeping the whole law in the spirit, as well as in the letter; and He says to those that love Him, and strive to order their conversation aright, "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

In this matter you can be a law unto yourselves; and I want you to get the principle of strength which will enable you to be so. A Maine liquor law may not be desirable, or it may be evaded, but you can, by dint of a strong will, make each a Maine law for yourselves, and determine to avoid the public-house. And as the supply is always as to the demand, if no one went to the public-houses, we should soon see the number decreasing. I should certainly like to have the temptation taken out of your way; but if we cannot accomplish that, I want you to carry about with you a charm, a talisman, which shall make you safe and strong against it.

I recently saw a discussion as to the influence of the innumerable public-houses and beer-shops as causes of intemperance, where the diminution of the number was very strongly advocated, and a remark was quoted, that though a labouring man may get by two or three such houses on his road home from work, he will hardly get by seven or eight; therefore, it was thought to be the duty of the public to protect itself against the evils which the existing number of public-houses produced.

It is seldom that any one starts away from home

with the deliberate intention to get drunk in one house ; rather, as he passes by, he goes in for a glass here, and just one glass there, until he is overcome, and determines then to sit down and enjoy himself ! And a poor enjoyment it is, you know, who have to wake up next morning with a stupid or distracting head, and with a retrospect anything but pleasing or satisfactory.

I do not want to enter into questions of political economy, or any questions that are too high for us, but I want you to think over the subject, and to see that, in the existing state of things, you make matters worse ; either by a careless indifference, taking things as they are, without caring to see if they can be made better, or by fretting about questions which do not concern you ; instead of each one determining that you will try to improve what can be improved, and patiently submit to what cannot.

“In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird,” yet man, more foolish than the birds, rushes headlong into the snare. You watch the erection or enlargement of a public-house : I mourn that another snare is being set in the way of unwary feet ; you only wait for it to be opened to pass into the very mouth of the destroyer. For is not the drink one of the most potent agents of that wise caterer for souls by which the devil overcomes and takes so many captive at his will ? Is there not in the public-house wrought destruction of soul and body, of home and happiness, of self-respect, time, and money ? You say, “Light come, light go,” but

I have often grieved to see it *hard* come, light go—to see the money, sometimes so hardly earned (and so little of it sometimes), yet flung away with such a careless hand, drinking yourselves, and even treating others, when the home is, perhaps, in sore need, and hope deferred is making the hearts of those waiting there sick with disappointment. Did you ever think that when you throw away your money so recklessly for spirits and beer, when your shillings and pennies drop into the publican's till, you are putting the metal into the devil's furnace, to be forged by him into another link in the chain by which he holds you fast and drags you down to hell? I don't think either that any frequenter of the public-house can lay claim to the blessedness spoken of in the first Psalm—"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." You know better than I can that there are other dangers besides poverty incurred by those who waste their time in the public-house. "Many thousands sell their right of inheritance to a kingdom for vastly less worthy objects than even that for which Esau bartered his;" and it seems to me that sadly too many sacrifice happiness here and hereafter, not for a "mess of pottage," but for a sup of drink.

It goes to my heart to hear the cry, "They do tempt me so; why do they have so many public-houses?" from one and another, feeling their own weakness. I do not want you to shift the respon-

sibility off your own shoulders. You know you *need not give way*, though I know you feel it very hard to be so tempted. Times without number you are angry with yourselves for being so weak as to give way and do that which, in your sober and better moments, you determine not to do, knowing it to be foolish and wrong.

I am always vexed when I see men going into the public-house on their way home from work; it is just such a foolish habit, and a literal waste of money. One with whom I remonstrated said that, working in the dust and dirt as he did, he could not take his tea unless he had a little rum to set him straight. Of course, I did not agree with him, but tried to make him agree with me, that a thorough good wash, and a good rinse of his mouth with cold water, was what he wanted, and that the spirit was more likely to take away his appetite than to quicken it; while I told him my fear that the little drop would soon lose its power, and he would then think that he required a little more.

I lately saw an expression which sounds amusing, and yet is what I so often have felt and wished to say to you—"I wish you would eat each other's health instead of drinking it." There is a kindly feeling about the "drinking health," but I wish you would try to show your kindly feeling to one another in some other way than in what may be a real and sore temptation to one who is striving to overcome the propensity to drink. I have often heard it complained, "They are ready enough to treat a man

to drink, and never think that he would rather have something to eat." I am always sorry when I hear any one, gentle or simple, pressed to take a little, to take another glass, when they know they have had enough. I beseech you to abstain from doing it.

I was amused at a kindly Scotchwoman's desire to show me hospitality on one occasion. She warmly appreciated some little kindnesses I had been able to do her, lending books to her boy, &c., and when I went to pay her a visit she was most anxious to make me welcome. Fresh milk was on the table, and she was in the act of making scones for the family tea; both were pressed upon me, but, unfortunately I was obliged to decline, having a dislike to both. Then she asked if I would have a little whisky; and, being quite disappointed she could find nothing I liked, she bethought her of a pot of black currant jam, which I gratefully accepted, to her great satisfaction.

Many tell me that when the taste for drinking is once acquired, and it is wished to break through the sad habit, there is nothing for it but total abstinence. Then total abstinence let it be! And let us thank God for those whom the pledge has reclaimed from utter misery. For, as has been very often said to me, "When the drink is in the wit is out, and you'll never do anything with a drunkard till you get him to be sober, then you have some chance of making him listen to religion, or anything else."

Oh! wives, if your husbands ask you to take the pledge, don't think there is no need, but do it, for

his sake who asks you, if not for your own, that you may not have the bitter regret in time to come that I have seen, thinking you might have been a help to him and you were a hindrance. When we were staying once in a pretty little village in the North we thought our landlady looked somewhat sad. I had noticed her husband was hardly ever in at the times one usually expects to find working men at home, and that he rarely, if ever, came in before ten o'clock, if then. I also had half fancied the step was not always quite so steady as might be. The day before we left, she was assisting me in some little preparations, which gave me the opportunity of a little friendly chat. We were talking about their fine little unruly boy, and the difficulty of getting to church when the house was full of visitors and she was so busy. Then her husband would not go without her, and they both got out of the habit of going, and when she had the time, she did not like to go without him. I sympathised a little, and presently looking at her, I saw such a weary look on her face that I could not help the words, "Is your husband a trouble to you?" on which the pent-up tears flowed fast.

She told me she had been in service in a clergyman's family in a large town, and had occasionally seen so much of the terrible effects of the drink, that she had most earnestly hoped she never should have anything to do with it. Her husband was a joiner, and could easily earn thirty-five shillings a-week, but she said he was not very strong, and had grown

out of heart, by reason of misfortune which he had brought upon himself. They sometimes feared whether they should be able to keep up their lodging house (though every one seemed very kind to them), but this failed to rouse him. They had been married some five or six years. He was teetotal when she became acquainted with him, and continued so for about two years. Such a happy time she said it was, when they lived in a little cottage all to themselves; but the thin end of the wedge was even then being introduced; he was often laughed at for abstaining, and spirit was put into his tea and gruel as opportunity offered. And, by the time that some houses he was building for himself were finished, he thought at the bean-feast there could be no harm in doing as others did. He had often asked his wife to be teetotal, but she always said she was not in the least tempted, therefore she saw no need for her to take the pledge. Now she bitterly regretted not having strengthened his resolution by complying with his wish. All had gone wrong since that time, and she sometimes lost heart and hope completely. I don't mean to say she could have kept him straight, or that any one can actually keep another; but it is sad to have to look back with regret on what might have been, and think we might have encouraged and strengthened such an one—given a lift up—instead of which we have, by our carelessness of temptation for them, or thoughtlessness of word and manner, been pushing them farther down.

At night, as I lay awake thinking of and praying

for them, I heard his hollow cough, and felt I must get an opportunity of speaking to him before saying good-bye. I did not wish him to know his wife had told me her trouble, which indeed I had already guessed, so I remarked on his cough and one or two things I had seen for myself. I told him the story of "Ready," and asked if he were ready for death. A sad shake of the head was all the answer. So I pleaded with him, as God gave me the ability, to break off his sins by righteousness, and make sure work for eternity, that the next time he was asked about readiness for death, he might be able joyfully to say that he had no fear, since he knew for himself the pardoning love of God, and was able to rest in the assurance that the Lord Jesus Christ had lived and died for him.

The apostle Paul says, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection," "Be temperate in all things," and I am rather inclined to think temperance a braver thing, and a nobler virtue than absolute teetotalism. But I have often, on various occasions, been a teetotaller for months and even years, if so, by any means, I might help some waverers, that when they have said to me, "It's all very fine for you to talk, but I suppose you have your wine;" I could say "No, for your sakes I am abstaining. I can 'contain myself' without the pledge, but I am quite willing to exercise a little self-denial in this matter." For, though "the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost," yet

"if meat," or drink "make my brother to offend, I will take none while the world standeth." "For we then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves." "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof;" and "every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving," but, "whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God, giving none offence." And in these matters we need not set up to be judges of one another; what one can do another cannot, and what is good for one is not good for another.

"If the labourer merely drank a glass or two of beer with his meals, I, for one, should not find fault with him. But he is not satisfied with this, he walks off from his family to the public-house, pays one hundred per cent. more for his beer than he has any need to pay for it, and what is far worse, becomes a tippler and drinks to excess. Here then is the chief cause of the existing destitution. And this excessive drinking has been increasing steadily for many years past." "It would be easy to show that this prevalent intemperance is the parent of most of the crimes of the poor, as well as of their poverty. Argument is needless on this point, because it is generally admitted." "It was the drink that did it," is a most sadly common excuse.

I asked a man how it was that he was now apparently turning over a new leaf, and wishing and able to do better. "I think it's keeping out of the public-house," was the reply, though to my satisfac-

tion, he added "and praying more." Seeing the misery that drinking brings, I am thankful for anything that will raise the drunkard, and give him some hope of doing better; but it seems to me as if the teetotal movement stopped short half-way, or at any rate that teetotallers rather pride themselves on their teetotalism, as if there was something in it, or in themselves to enable them to stand firm, and that they very often put it in the place of religion. If I ask of one, Do you go to church or chapel? I constantly receive the reply, "I go to the teetotal meeting;" and I am not satisfied. I believe the devil can use teetotalism for keeping some souls out of heaven, just as well as he can use drunkenness and rioting for keeping others out. He is very well pleased if he can make us pride ourselves on our respectability. It is all one to him to make us sew the filthy rags of our own righteousness together and try to wash ourselves with much soap, and let us make a fair show before men, if so he can mar God's work, and have us lose the right way to heaven.

So I do not want to see teetotalism put instead of religion. It has done a great work, and I could find it in my heart to wish that all were total abstainers when I see the comfortable homes of those who determinedly resist the temptation to squander their money on drink; but I want to see it going hand in hand with religion. You may get to heaven without teetotalism, but you cannot get there without Christ; and if you lean only on your-

selves, if you trust only to your teetotalism, you may yet sink down more hopelessly than ever. The pledge is a very good thing in its way and in its place, but I want you to have a better safeguard than the pledge. "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long," is a very good fence to keep us from going off the road; and this also, "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee." The love of Christ in the heart, the sustaining grace of the Holy Spirit, the sure hope of victory through the blood of the Lamb, this will be a talisman that we may rely on to carry us happily through the dangers which surround us. My friends, do you know the meaning of two little verses of which I am very fond, "The fear of the Lord is his treasure," "The joy of the Lord is your strength?" Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ, "who gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world according to the will of God;" can you say, "The love of Christ constraineth me," for "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us?" Then you have a better safeguard than the pledge, a surer charm than anything we can devise for ourselves.

"The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me
And can I be dismayed?"

"Soldiers of Christ arise
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son."

Do you wonder sometimes when you see one standing firm now whom you have seen falling often enough before? He has learned the secret of self-distrust and of cleaving to the Lord. He has cried out when buffetting with the waves of temptation which threatened to overwhelm, "Lord, save, or I perish," "Oh, set me up upon the rock that is higher than I," and that cry is never heard without a speedy putting forth of the hand of Jesus, as of old he caught Peter, when afraid of the boisterous wind.

"God never yet forsook at need
The soul that trusted Him in deed."

I want to see you distrustful of yourselves while yet you have the fullest confidence in God's ability, and His willingness to exercise it on your behalf, renewing your youth as the eagle's. Many of you think you are so firm now you can never be tempted again. Oh, beware! "In time of temptation, fall away" is true of too many. You pray, "Lead us not into temptation," but you go away and forget your prayer; you forget to watch against the temptation; you forget to cry out for deliverance when the evil comes close to you; rather too often you place yourself in the way of temptation. You may escape for some time, but it is only as we are "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," that we can stand against all the wiles of the devil; and when I see some "just going in to look on," or going as near as they can to sin without actually giving way, I think they are like poor Van Am-

burgh, who was accustomed to put his head fearlessly into the lion's mouth, and one day so met with his death. "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." Oh, be "not ignorant of his devices;" be very careful of yielding ever so little to his persuasions.

"Many have yielded to go a mile with Satan that never intended to go two, but, when once on the way, have been allured further and further, till at last they know not how to leave his company. Thus Satan leads poor creatures down into the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom whither they are going. Many who at this day lie in open profaneness never thought they should have rolled so far from their profession; but Satan beguiled them, poor souls, with their modest beginnings. Oh, give not place to Satan! no, not an inch in his first motions!" "Satan begins with small temptations, and ends with great ones. Give an inch, Satan will take an ell. St. Peter began his fall by mixing with bad company about a fire; he ended by denying his Master with oaths and curses." Cannot you remember feeling vexed that you yielded the *inch*? Why did you yield? Sometimes it is that in meeting with old friends it would be so cold and unkind not to sit down and have a talk together over the "just one glass." Sometimes it is so mean, it looks so bad to be "near" when others are ready to treat you that you should not be ready to join and stand treat too.

Sometimes I am told, "it was just vexation, you see." So the good resolutions of weeks or months melt away, because there was "no rule over the spirit," because, in a moment of irritation, the cry was not put up, "Be thou to me a strong tower from the face of the enemy," the truth of the word was not realised, "The Lord is my rock and my fortress, my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. *Whereunto I may always resort*" was David's confidence respecting it, and well would it be for us if we never forgot it, and could set our seal to the truth of those other words of his, "In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul." "He that hath no rule over his spirit is like a city broken down and without walls," but "he that endureth to the end the same shall be saved.

I am always grieved when I find that the wages are paid at the public-house. I have not heard quite so much of it lately, perhaps it is not so much done; but it seems to me a cruel way of tempting souls, and I think that if the men *quietly* remonstrated, the masters must see the reasonableness of the remonstrance, and honour the motives which actuated it. I well remember meeting with a man I found sitting by the wayside one Saturday afternoon some years ago now. He was come for the payment of his week's wages. The other men were in the public-house, where the money was to be received, but he had learnt by bitter experience that

the only safety for him was in keeping outside the public-house; so there he was, quietly waiting till his turn came to be paid. We beguiled the time pleasantly with a little chat as to his new hopes and better prospects since he had determinately struggled against giving way to the drink: better and brighter than of earth, as he was striving in God's strength, and was proving the comfort of living for God. I trust he has been enabled to hold fast, waxing stronger and stronger, and that he may go on to inherit those blessed promises "to him that overcometh."

"Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,
All is accomplished, and the work is done,
Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it,
Scarce were it ended with thy setting sun."

VIII.

ONCE MORE.

AND now, dear friends, if you have gone patiently along with me you will at least see that I am earnestly desirous for you that you should be happy; and as I know that there is only one way of being truly happy, I am intensely anxious that you should choose that way. God says, "See I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil—life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave to Him: for He is thy life and the length of thy days."

Whenever any one speaks to you in Bible words, whenever any one pleads with you to "consider your ways," whenever any holy thought comes into your mind, whenever any anxious thought is roused up by accident or illness to yourself, or death among your friends, it is God's voice speaking to your heart. Do not, I beseech you, turn a deaf ear to His pleading. "It is time to seek the Lord," it is in-

deed. "Arise ye and depart; for this is not your rest, for it is polluted." It is indeed, and you know it, and many an aching heart longs to know the truth, "This the rest wherewith ye may cause the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing." "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise and call upon thy God." Has never this word sounded in your ears? "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?" Savonarolo, a monk who preached at Florence, and paid the penalty of his life for his enlightened notions nearly four hundred years ago, said, what is true enough now-a-days, "Preach to the people as much as you will; they have got one habit of listening well, and another of doing that which is evil. The habit has become a second nature, and they have thus got into the way of hearing and not doing. And thus it is as difficult to turn them out of that way as it is to divert the course of a river. Thou art like the rook in the steeple, which, when it first hears the sound of the bell, is struck with fear and terror, but after a little while acquires the habit of listening, and you may sound as loud as you please, there it sits on the steeple and never moves." And now, is not this also sadly true? "We all feel it must be a blessed thing to die the death of the righteous, to be safe in Christ. Strange that we should put off the question, 'Am I safe in Christ?' What a gambling spirit there must be in us by nature, that we are able to go out and come in, to rise up and lie down, to work

and rest, to attend to business and enjoy society day by day, and night by night, and yet never know whether, if death came to us, as he may at any moment, we should wake in hell."

You will think I have said some things over and over again, and may be now I shall repeat some still once more before I close, as I am most anxious by any means to catch your eye and ear, that if it please God I may catch your heart, and win you to Christ. In the Bible we find God repeating His messages in many ways, so that we are left without excuse. "Precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little, and there a little." So I ask you again if you know the love of God, if you are living this life for God by the faith of Jesus Christ, looking unto Him, fighting manfully under His banner against the foes in your own heart and in the world around. I ask whether you are doing your daily work as under the eye of a heavenly Master. "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." If the message comes to you, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live," shall you be able to lie down peacefully, saying, "I shall be satisfied when I awake up after thy likeness?" If you can honestly say "yes," you are happy indeed: "inexpressibly happy in His love" as an old servant of the Lord Jesus lately said on his dying bed: but if not —

"While sin is cherished God cannot be desired or loved. If we felt sure that God was our God, that He loved us, cared for us, forgave us, that He had

taken charge of us, and was comforting and blessing and loving us, we should cease to tremble, and should cry out, 'Lord, let it be unto me according to thy word. Lord, be my God and let me, O let me, be thy son through Jesus Christ.' To have God with us is to be perfectly safe, to have God for our God is to be perfectly happy." Now, are you *perfectly happy*? I do not mean, do you never have any troubles, but have you that "hope as an anchor cast within the veil," which shall keep you riding safely on the waves of this troublesome world? Do you know the meaning of this word, "Thou wilt keep him in *perfect peace*, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee?"

Many of you are very respectable, but you are not religious, why not? Many of you wish you were religious, think it would be better if you were a little more so, but you don't know how it is you can't be. When I look at some of you I think "not far from the kingdom of heaven;" but you might as well be ever so far if you are to be just outside, if you are just to miss gaining an entrance within the gates of the heavenly city. Do you remember the young man who came running to Jesus with the inquiry, "What good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He was apparently so earnest, so determined to get to heaven; and so beautiful was his natural character that it is most touchingly recorded that the Lord, "beholding him, loved him;" but there was something that made him turn sadly away from Jesus, and shut himself up from hope

of the life he was inquiring about. Had he known his heart, had he seen "the chambers of imagery," the dark places of his heart lit up with the light of the Holy Spirit, he would have shuddered at Christ's answer to his question, "This do, and thou shalt live." He would have felt that it raised an impossible barrier between him and what he longed for, and would never have said, "All these commandments have I kept from my youth up," but rather, "All these have I broken." "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in *one point* is guilty of all;" and sin is not written in pencil, so that it can be easily rubbed out; and God does not forget it.

The outside life of that young ruler was blameless; but outside religion is no use. The outside morality and respectability that you pride yourselves on, is no passport to heaven. How many of you plead that you are honest and upright; that you never did any one any harm; that you are sure no one can find fault with you; that you go to church sometimes; that you are not worse than your neighbours, and that you only give way now and then. Ah! we may manage to carry it off before our neighbours, we may even put on a cloak of religion and make a very fair show; but "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." "The Lord weigheth the spirits, he pondereth the hearts." He looks through all disguises.

"The mighty whole, each smaller part
At once before thee lies,
And every thought of every heart
Is open to thine eyes.

"Though greatly from myself concealed
Thou know'st my inmost frame,
To Thee I always stand revealed
Exactly as I am.

"Since therefore I can hardly bear
What in myself I see,
How vile, how black, must I appear,
Most Holy God, to Thee."

So the Master's eye looked through the fair seeming of that young ruler, and detected the canker. He laid His finger on the sore spot, and applied the probe, and the young man could not bear it. He went away from Jesus, instead of creeping to Him and entreating Him as the Great Physician to heal the plague. His heart was chained with a golden chain, but it matters little what chains and fetters are made of, so long as they bind. Some are "bound with the cords of their sins," and some are equally bound with a cord of indifference, or even a cord of respectability. So you that are respectable, happy, who may have outwardly turned over a new leaf, is there anything that you lack? is there anything that you love better than Jesus? is there anything that will keep you out of heaven? *Anything.* With the young ruler it was his great possessions, and his unwillingness to take up the Cross and follow Christ. But for us it need not be Achan's wedge of gold, or these great treasures,

though it may be the offence of the Cross. It may be just one little sin; one little bad habit that we think it can matter to no one that we hug and retain: it may be only that, "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God," may be written against our name. Do we not all need to go to God humbly and say, "Lord, show me myself," search me, prove me, try me, and show me the wicked way that is in my heart, but not without at the same time showing me Thyself revealed in Christ Jesus.

"What think ye of Christ?" said Jesus to the Jews of old. "What think ye of Christ?" says He to the men of this day, and what answer shall we return? As our thoughts of Christ are, so is our religion. There are very few of us who can say, "I never heard of Christ." Most of us have been familiar with the Gospel story from our very infancy; but what then? To have a head knowledge, to know *about* Him, is that all, or is it enough?" Nay, verily. "This is life eternal to *know* Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent;" it is more than knowing about Him, it is intimate acquaintance with Him. Are we content to say He was a good man? True, His life was lived as an example for us, and if we love Him we shall be ever striving so to walk as He walked. "Christ suffered leaving us an example," but oh! far more than that; if He had come to this earth only to be a teacher and an example, there had been no love, no hope, no life, no heaven for us. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,

that we being dead to sins should live unto God." "Christ also hath once suffered, *the just for the unjust*, that he might bring us to God." "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Do we believe all that those words tell us?

We see in daily life the effect of a receptive belief. See one roused to action from a firm persuasion of the need of it, induced by belief in another's word: and see another sitting idly by, because he does not believe, and does not care to search into the meaning of the warning, advice, or report. So what effect does our knowledge about Christ, and our so-called belief in Him, have on our lives? This is a question of the utmost importance to us. It will make *all* the difference to us whether we think rightly or wrongly about Christ, His life, His work, His great salvation. The more we know Him, as taught by the Holy Spirit, drawn to Him by His great love and fulness meeting our great sense of emptiness and need, the more we shall enjoy peace and all the blessings of salvation.

Ever this question, "What think ye of Christ?" meets us as we go through the world. We may put it by now, but by and bye how we shall wish that we had given the subject the thought it demands and deserves. Too many care "for none of these things," they are taken up with the things "that perish with the using," they will not heed that awful question, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

O friends, "consider Christ Jesus," the "altogether lovely" one, "the chiefest among ten thousand," the "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother;" the "Friend of sinners," the "Prince and the Saviour exalted to give repentance and remission of sins." What think *ye* of Him? What is the story of His *life* to us? What is the story of His *death* to us? Do we treat it as if it had no concern for us? Do the words fall lightly on careless ears, seeming "but as idle tales?" "Neither did his brethren believe on him." Is it written down of us, "Neither did they, living in a Christian land, called with a holy calling, baptized with a Christian name, neither did they believe on Him. Satan tries to persuade us to put off the consideration of the subject, tries to make us lull ourselves off from anxiety about our souls, with the thought that there is plenty of time yet, and that it does not matter so very much.

Does it not matter? Oh, how much! Ask the rich man who "in hell lift up his eyes being in torment;" ask the man to whom the message came, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Ask those who were going to finish a holiday at the Bristol Theatre, but had the life crushed out of them before they could get in to see the sight. Ask him, we wot of, who staggering home only a little the worse for drink, fell on his pick, and the iron entering his hand, was the messenger of death to him, which sent the iron into his mother's soul. Ask him who perished in the foul air of the well; ask him who was crushed to death by the

waggon, one moment, hale, hearty, and strong, and the next ——! Ask those who have perished by sudden accident; those fifty-seven who went forth bravely to their work in a coal-pit one morning, and in a very few hours had to render up the account of their work. Oh, was it for joy or sorrow? and when the summons comes to us, how will it be? It is an awful question: let us lay it to heart.

Does it not matter what we think of Christ and His great salvation? Ask those who, plucked as brands from the burning, are now singing "to the praise of the glory of his grace, who hath made us accepted in the Beloved," "to him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory." Ask the thief who, dying on the cross, proved the blessedness of the Saviour's words, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Ask Paul, who says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection;" "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" "And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory." Ask Peter, whose soul must have thrilled at the recollection of the saving and restoring grace accorded him, as he wrote, "Unto you which believe he is precious. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." He must have known, if ever any one did. He who had fallen so low as to quail before a serving maid, and to deny his Lord with oaths and curses, and yet had his wan-

dering heart taken captive again by the extraordinary love and pity condensed in that look in the judgment-hall, when "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter went out and wept bitterly." He who, in bitter grief at the thrice repeated question, "Lovest thou me?" replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee," and by and bye was enabled to rejoice with the others that he was "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Oh, friends, put it to yourselves again, "What think ye of Christ?" Are you able to say, "He is all my salvation, and all my desire." "He is my friend, my Saviour, my all in all?"

Will you pray Luther's prayer, "Lord, take from me all that might keep me from *Thee*. Lord give to me all that may draw me to *Thee*. Lord take from me and give to me all that may make me *Thine* for ever." Will you listen to the word, "My son, give me thine *heart*." "*Son, go work to-day* in my vineyard." Remember, "The night cometh when no man can work." Do you not hear the question, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" You surely need not return answer, "Because no man hath hired us." And, remember, idleness for God means activity for Satan; for Christ says, "He that is not with me is against me." "Idleness is the cradle that Satan delights to rock," and we know it is all too true that—

"Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do,"—

for idle thoughts to do. Those who stand at the idle corner, literally or figuratively, are just inviting Satan to send them about his work. "The slothful man says, There is a lion in the way." So there may be, but the lions are chained, and powerless to hurt those who go bravely forward determined not to be daunted. There are difficulties in the way of making and keeping good resolutions, but none that need deter a brave honest spirit from making an effort "*now*."

" Rise ! for the day is passing,
And you lie dreaming on,
The others have buckled their armour,
And forth to the fight are gone.
A place in the ranks awaits you,
Each man has some part to play,
The past and the future are nothing
In the face of the stern to-day.

" Rise from your dreams of the future,
Of gaining some hard-fought field,
Of storming some airy fortress,
Of bidding some giant yield.
Your future has deeds of glory,
Of honour (God grant it may),
But your arm will never be stronger,
Or your need so great as to-day.

" Rise ! if the past detain you,
Her sunshine and storm forget,
No chains so unworthy to hold you,
As those of a vain regret.
Sad or bright, she is lifeless ever,
Cast her phantom arms away,
Nor look back, save to learn the lesson
Of a nobler strife to-day.

“ Rise ! for the day is passing,
The sound that you scarcely hear
Is the enemy marching to battle,
Arise ! for the foe is near.
Stay not to sharpen your weapon,
Or the hour will strike at last,
When from dreams of a coming battle,
You may wake to find it past.”

Have you begun to work for God, to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” knowing that it is, and because it is “God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.” “With God all things are possible,” and “strengthened with all might by his spirit in the inner man,” you may go bravely through the difficulties and trials that surround you in your daily life, for “when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him.” Only let Job’s confidence be yours, “Will he plead against me with his great power? No, but he will put strength in me,” and you can unhesitatingly lean back and test the strength treasured up in the words, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty, I have exalted one chosen out of the people.” “Be strong then in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” We get the secret of strength in that beautiful little song, the 12th chapter of Isaiah, “And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee : though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid : for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song;

he also is become my salvation." No one ever yet loved God, or loved to work for Him, who knows not the joy of pardon ; " to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much." " We love him because he first loved us." " And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." " Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" was the question which sprang to Saul's lips when stricken to the earth by the revelation of the Lord Jesus. " It shall be told thee what thou must do," was the answer then, and presently the lesson was enlarged further, " I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Towards the end of his life he could write, " I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith. The Lord stood with me and strengthened me. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."

" Father, I know that all my life
Is portioned out by Thee,
And the changes that must surely come,
I do not fear to see.
But I ask Thee for the quiet mind,
Intent on pleasing Thee."

There is our work set out,—

" Intent on pleasing Thee,
And careful less to serve Thee much,
Than to please Thee perfectly,"—

to do the will of the Father in heaven, learning of

Him who said, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

We cannot, indeed, do the work the Lord Jesus did: "No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him. For it cost more to redeem their souls, so he must let that alone for ever." Neither can we work out a righteousness by which to recommend ourselves to God, as "there is none righteous, no, not one." "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" "For all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." But "this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Christ's work is finished, and he offers us a full salvation: our work is to accept it, and then, out of the fulness of a grateful loving heart to walk "in newness of life." "To show forth his praise not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to his service, and walking before him all the days of our life." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. I will receive you, for I am a just God." "Having, therefore, these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." "I beseech you, therefore, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "Blessed are all they that hear the word of God and keep it."

If we can look up to Him and say, "Lord, thou

wilt ordain peace for us : for thou also hast wrought all our works in us," we can go on to say, "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children, and let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and stablish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Are we living in Nehemiah's spirit, who, intent on his self-denying work, quietly pursued it, in spite of all hindrance, saying, "I am doing a great work, I cannot come down." God has indeed given us a great work to do, and but for the assurance we have referred to before—"It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure ;" "as thy days, so shall thy strength be; fear not, I will help thee, I will uphold thee,"—we might well shrink from undertaking it. So great and so hard a work—for our proud hearts, to humble ourselves before Him; and for our weak wavering hearts, to keep His commandments, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and to fight against sin—is bound up in the simple work of accepting a free gift believing in the love that offers it.

"And must I nothing do ?

Nothing, my child ! Christ has done all for you."

Why stand we idle ? seeing "there is yet very much land to be possessed," and the enemy will contend with us for every inch of ground.

"The narrow way that leads us up to heaven

Must here through tribulation lie ;

Then on the thorny path may strength be given,
This sinful flesh, O Lord, to crucify.
Here daily crosses come to try our weakness,
Here every member must a burden bear."

"So I ask Thee for the daily strength
To none that ask denied,
And a heart to blend with outward life,
While keeping at Thy side,
Content to fill a little space
If Thou be glorified."

If we love the Lord Jesus, it is sweet to be allowed to do anything, even the least service, for Him, and blessed will it be for us if the commendation is ours, "She hath done what she could." Our Father only looks for work from each according to his ability. Mary's eager feet were ready to take her away from the sepulchre when commissioned for work by her Master; it was only to take a loving message to the "disciples and Peter," but it was for the Lord. He may have a different work for each of us, He may bid us "do and dare, or suffer and be still," but we have only to feel it is our Father's will, and all will go smoothly.

"I remember how I lingered
At the golden gate of Life,
Listening to the far-off murmur
Of its strange and solemn strife.

"And I asked with eager longing
What the weapon I should wield
'Mid the ever-surging conflict
Of that ancient battle-field—

For it seemed a glorious mission
In that battle's mighty heart,
If with patient, steadfast striving,
I might bear a lowly part.

"Yet I thank Thee, O my Father,
For the work Thy love makes sweet,
For I know 'tis bless'd and holy,
While I do it at Thy feet.

"True, it is not what I asked for,
In the first full throb of life ;
Not the tumult and the warfare,
Not the busy, restless strife.
But the patient, watchful service,—
By the hidden might of prayer,
By the simple strength of loving,
I may help the toilers there."

That is a very blessed title, "labourers together with God," and if we have been led to give ourselves to the Lord, we shall gladly give ourselves to the work of the Lord, and, "spend, and be spent" in His service. "Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Work will always be found ready to our hand, sometimes apparently great, sometimes obviously trivial, never *really* so when we are working under our Lord's eye, doing our Father's business, serving the Lord Christ. For God looks not so much at the act as at the motive, and "small service is true service," when done aright. The little child's hand may help "to gather out the stones" from the way of stumbling feet, or raise the "cup of cold water" to parched and weary lips, and these

little acts are ennobled, if the Saviour says of them, "Ye did it unto me." We need not think such little things are beneath the notice of our God, when He has permitted the record of Ebed-melech the Ethiopian's kind thoughtfulness concerning His servant Jeremiah (xxxviii. 6-16); the "old cast clouts and rotten rags," which were to prevent the ropes from hurting Jeremiah's arms in lifting him out of the dungeon being thought worthy of mention. And though our confession must ever be, "We have left undone that which we ought to have done, we have done that which we ought not to have done;" and "when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants, we have but done that which was our duty to do," yet, laying down our work before Him, as done unto Him, we may, in humble hope, leave it with Him "who shall render to every man according as his work shall be." And when He tells us our work here is finished, we may joyfully say, "I will lay me down in peace and sleep," to be satisfied with those wondrous words, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

Why stand we idle? Is there no work to do, no sin to strive against, no bad habit to break through, no foolish waywardness to overcome, no grace to cultivate, no—

"Work of lowly love to do
For the Lord on whom we wait;"

no forlorn one to comfort, no little one to lead,

no weak hands to strengthen, no feeble knees to confirm, no souls to win for Jesus, no erring one to reclaim and encourage to return to the paths of virtue and happiness? Oh! the time is all too short for us to sit with folded hands. I so often think of the poor negro's speech, and wish we could all act upon it. At a meeting of converted negroes, either for interesting them in missionary work or to talk about building a church for themselves, it has escaped my memory which, they were asked if, by and bye, when the work was organised, they would spare a little money. An old negro immediately answered the appeal by coming forward and saying, as he laid down three small packets of money separately before the missionary, "That's for me, Massa, that's for my wife, Massa, that's for my child, Massa." The minister's remonstrance that he did not then want the money, only that they should be stirred up to a ready mind, was met by the quiet reply, "*God's work must be done, and I may be dead.*" "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man *as his work shall be.*" And what shall ours be in that day?

Oh, that those who know it not yet, might be roused up to inquire about this work of God, and to see and prove for themselves that working for God is safer, happier, better in a thousand ways than working for self and Satan! See the results of the work for God and the work for Satan contrasted. "Whoso committeth sin is the servant of sin," and

"the wages of sin is death." "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." And "let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey whether of *sin* unto *death*, or of obedience unto righteousness, and the end *everlasting life*." "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." "Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

"How blessed, from the bonds of sin
And earthly fetters free,
In singleness of heart and aim
Thy servant, Lord, to be!
The hardest toil to undertake
With joy at Thy command,
The meanest office to receive
With meekness at Thy hand!

"With willing heart and longing eyes,
To watch before Thy gate,
Ready to run the weary race,
To bear the heavy weight.

How happily the working days
In this dear service fly,
How rapidly the closing hour,
The time of rest, draws nigh !
When all the faithful gather home,
A joyful company,
And ever where the Master is,
Shall His blest servants be."

IX.

GOOD THINGS, AND GOOD-BYE.

If you look back to the first page you will find a question which, though uttered hundreds of years ago, still rings on, wrung from aching, disappointed hearts. You sometimes ask me how we can tell that the Bible is true. I answer, One thing that impresses its truth on me is the description, accurate and true, which I there find of the way in which the world goes on. The words people say, the questions they ask, the thoughts they think, the things they do, are written down there in a way in which no mere man could have put them down. And this question is to me one proof of the truth of the Bible. Solomon tells us, "There is nothing new under the sun, the thing which hath been shall be again." He looked abroad through the world, and he heard this cry, "*Who will show us any good?*" It was waked up in his own heart, though he had every good around him, and every possibility of satisfying his desires; and his conclusion, from what he saw and heard, and from the craving of his own

heart, was, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." "Who knoweth what is good for a man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, yet hath he seen no good." "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Is not this too true? The unsatisfied longing, the craving for something good and lasting, is there, and each heart invents for itself some way of making good, of getting on well, of killing time; following busily some way of driving away thought, or striving to find an answer to this question. Some determine to make themselves a name, some to increase in knowledge; some set up before them an ideal of excellence and nobleness, and determine to attain to it, that so they "may see good," but all is unsuccessful, and ever again breaks forth the cry, "Who will show us any good?"

I know not if you will think I have helped you to an answer to the question. For ever as thoughts came I have written them down as replies to words and objections of yours which recurred to my mind, and you may think I have left the actual question on one side. But you will recollect that I told you I wished to lead you to the only good One who has overcome evil—the evil one and all his works—with good by the manifestation of His own goodness, and turned all the evil for us into good, if we could only but see it so. "Behold the goodness and severity of God." My wish has been to wake the heart cry, that those who

"labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity," may listen to the response which is whispering in the summer breeze, and pencilled in the winter's frost, which gleams with light from the sacred page, and thunders forth in the sudden storm of God's providential dealings; "The earth is full of thy goodness. Thou, Lord, art good, and doest good. Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. The Lord is good to all. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him." What want we more than this? Yet He multiplies the answer, "Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above. Shall not your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?"

The Psalmist cries, "Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts;" and Solomon tells us, "The upright shall have good things in possession;" "bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure." Yes, it is true, "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life;" and the word is assured by Paul echoing the strains of Isaiah, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." "O God, who hast prepared for them that love thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love towards thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises which exceed all that we can desire."

If we want *good*, we must turn away from all created good. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee." In our ignorance and folly we often "call good evil, and evil good;" we "put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter;" but sitting at the feet of Jesus with a teachable heart, determined to find the right answer to our questionings, "All earthly things their proper measure take." All things assume their right proportion, and fall into their proper place, when we can say, "Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will he teach sinners in the way;" and we can trust that the end of all His dealings with us is this, "To do thee good at thy latter end," for "He teacheth to profit," "and we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

"There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" but it is because they have not learnt to distinguish between *real* and *seeming* good; because, as yet, they know not that "the Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him." They know not that "it is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," and they want to learn their lesson in their own way, and prefer to buy their experience bitterly, having often to exclaim, "Miserable comforters are ye all," till they submit to be taught by the "good Spirit," who is ready to instruct them, and cry out, "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God; thy Spirit is good, lead me

into the land of uprightness." "Show me a token for good."

And is it not a token for good when He causes us "to hear His loving-kindness," and makes us long for the fulfilment of His promise, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me;" when He makes us "loathe ourselves," and beseech humbly, "Take away all iniquity?" Is it not good when we can say,—

"Who is a pardoning God like Thee,
Or who has grace so rich and free?"

—when weary with the conflict, fainting with the strife, we can yet comfort ourselves with the thought, "He will subdue our iniquities," for He has said, "I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end."

Is it not a token for good when "the spirit of grace and supplication" is poured out, and we are roused to call upon God's name, to stir up ourselves, "to take hold of" Him (Isa. lxiv. 7), to plead the promise and wait for its fulfilment, "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to

receive it." He is longing that you should be happy; if only you will listen to Him you "shall be satisfied with his goodness."

Is it not a token for good when the weary heart is brought to long for rest, when it feels the weight and weariness of sin, when it desires to be free from the oppression which crushes it to the dust? It is recorded of Jesus that He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil;" and are not many now so "oppressed," and is there not the same compassionate Saviour ready to accord favour to each one? We are told on one occasion that "the power of the Lord was present to heal;" and the power is there still, and the willingness is there still, for it is the "same Jesus" which went up into heaven, who is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins," who "shall so come again in like manner," "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye are not consumed." The hand of the Lord Jesus laid on a deformed body removed its crookedness, while the voice of Jesus pronounced the words, "Thou art loosed from thine infirmity," though the infirmity was of eighteen years' standing, and the poor sufferer "could in no wise lift up herself." Fit picture of those who are "bound of Satan." And it is even so now. Jesus is passing by. Listen, do you hear His question, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" Can you tell Him your wants, your wishes, your strivings, your

fruitless efforts to lift yourself up? Listen, do you hear Him say, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He knows you have "now been a long time in that case." It may be eighteen, or it may be "thirty and eight years;" no matter; answer truly, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Do you say, I should like it, but I have no power to lift myself, to move a step in the right way, to make myself good. I can't see the Saviour. "Nay, but, O man," are you saying truly, "We would see Jesus," "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean?" Then the power of seeing will come, then the healing, and rescue, and rest will come. Cry but out to Him, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," and you will soon be able to repeat the experience of that man, blind from his birth, to whom Jesus gave sight—"One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see;" and, with growing knowledge, go on to answer the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee," as he did. "And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." For though the whole world is in a fever fret, though we are each one, like "Peter's wife's mother, sick of a great fever," it needs but the touch of Jesus to set everything straight; to still the wild longing, to soothe the sore fretting, to chase the fever from the veins, to put new life and hope into the heart.

Of times I'm so weary,
My knees are so feeble, so hard seems the strife,
I fear I shall fail in the battle of life,
Yet whispers of love fall sweet on my ear

In accents of tenderness, chiding my fear :
Again I am taught that thy promises sweet
Will the hour of our weakness most certainly meet.

Listen to the loving words, "I will surely do thee good," which was the idea left on Jacob's mind by God's promise to him that He would be with him. The patriarch pleaded it more than twenty years after, and during all that time, in the varied circumstances of his chequered life, he had been drawing upon the assurance for comfort and strength. The Psalmist knew what he said when he exclaimed, "The Lord God is a sun and shield ; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," for his heart was full of the loving kindness of the Lord. And I want you to test His goodness, and prove for yourselves the reality of such words as these.

I know some of your troubles, some of the heart-achings that oppress you, but I am powerless to touch them or to remove them. God knows them all. He said long ago to His people, "I know your sorrows," and I can only tell you of Him, of His great love, of His tender compassion, of the fulness there is in Christ Jesus to meet every craving of the heart and longing of the soul. I can only refer you to that song which woke the echoes of the Bethlehem hills on the night when, in "the fulness of the time, God sent forth his son made of a woman," when the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory, laid aside that glory and shrouded His immortality in a mortal vest, "that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man," "that

through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." That song which, spoken first by one angel to the watching shepherds, was caught up in a glorious chorus by "a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Listen to the

" Message of love
Come down from above
To invite poor sinners to heaven,"

"Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "His name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." His purpose afterwards explained by Himself, "I am come that they might have life." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."

Moses pleaded earnestly, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," but the mortal eye cannot bear the revelation of God's glory in its full effulgence, and he got for answer, "I will make all my *goodness* pass before thee. Thou canst not see my face and live." And, hidden in the cleft of the rock, Moses heard the proclamation, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." Have we ever so pleaded? then remember, "God who commanded

the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" and "we all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Truly the loving purpose and grace of God hath been "made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." Truly "the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man" has been manifested in a marvellous way, when He who was "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," was content to take upon Him our flesh; and, that He might "magnify the law and make it honourable," wrought out a perfect transcript of that perfect law, and "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," so "being made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law," that "by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

When, with quickened ear and appropriating faith, we can rejoice in the words of the Good Shepherd, "I lay down my life for the sheep; I give unto them eternal life; they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand; Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory," we cannot help but exclaim, "Oh, how great is the goodness which

thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men." "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

"Oh! make but trial of His love,
Experience will decide,
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in His strength confide."

"There be many that say, Who will show us any good?" says the Psalmist, but he had been taught to solve the question for himself, and joyfully returned answer to himself, "Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, thou hast put gladness in my heart." Such gladness, such peace, that in spite of troubles which well-nigh crushed him to the earth, of terrible assaults of Satan which well-nigh extinguished the light that God had kindled for him, he could say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." For "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep" the "hearts and minds" of those who "have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before" them, who, with an earnest longing have pleaded, "Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance."

“ Jesus, the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills the breast,
But sweeter far Thy face to see,
And in Thy presence rest.

“ Oh ! hope of every contrite heart,
To penitents how kind ;
To those who seek how good Thou art,
But what to those who find.

“ Ah ! this no tongue can utter, this
No mortal page can show :
The love of Jesus what it is,
None but His loved ones know.”

My friends, I want you to know it.

“ All that seek will surely find,
Every good in Christ combined.”

Did you but know it, you would bravely bear the troubles that come to you, harassing, heart-breaking, as they are sometimes. Not *fretfully*, saying, “ I do well to be angry ; if God is as good as you say, why does he let this come to me, one trouble after another ; yes, I do think it hard.” Not *stoically*, as if you did not feel them ; “ Ah, well, we must just put up with it.” God never means us to take our troubles so. He does mean that we should feel them, but only so that, feeling them, we may say, “ Come and let us return to the Lord, for he hath torn and he will heal us ; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.” But *bravely*, saying, “ It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.” “ Good is the word of the Lord.” Some things just at the moment may not seem to be good, and in faithless mood we may cry out, “ All these things are against

me," but we may comfort ourselves with Joseph's retrospect, "*God meant it unto good,*" and there we may rest.

"The best will is our Father's will
And we may rest there calm and still.
Oh, make it hour by hour thine own,
And wish for nought but that alone
Which pleases God."

The alphabet must be learned before we can spell. The discipline of the school is to fit us for future life. The race must be run before the prize is gained. The wilderness journey and the passage through Jordan, must come before the entrance to the promised land. So the grace must come before the glory. And the grace given is a pledge of the glory to come as the Psalmist comforted himself, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel and after that receive me to glory." "The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me, Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever: forsake not the work of thine own hands." "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

"Return unto thy rest, my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

There in that secret place mayst thou abide
Quiet from fear of ill—

—There so safely hide
And strength in sitting still be found.

"I will mention the loving kindnesses of the Lord and the praises of the Lord according to all

that the Lord hath bestowed upon us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving kindnesses." That is a wonderful verse. Look at it well, and think of the expressions, and of the manifestations of his love and great goodness. Look round the earth; notice God's dealings with your friends; look back on the history of your own life and into your own heart, and are you not constrained to cry out again, "The Lord is good, blessed are all they that wait for him." "And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

"I journey through a desert drear and wild,
Yet is my heart with such sweet thoughts beguiled
Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,
I can forget the sorrows of the way.

"Thoughts of His love, the root of every grace
That finds in this poor heart a dwelling-place,
The sunshine of my soul, than day more bright,
And my calm pillow of repose by night.

"Thoughts of His sojourn in this vale of tears,
The tale of love unfolded in those years
Of sinless suffering and patient grace,
I love again and yet again to trace.

"Thoughts of His glory, on the Cross I gaze,
And there behold its sad yet healing rays,
Beacon of hope which, lifted up on high,
Illumes with heavenly light the tear-dimmed eye.

"Thoughts of his coming : for that joyful day
In patient hope I watch, I wait, I pray.

The dawn draws nigh, the midnight shadows flee ;
Oh, what a sunrise will that advent be !

“Thus while I journey on my Lord to meet,
My thoughts and meditations are so sweet
Of Him on whom I lean, my strength, my stay,
I can forget the sorrows of the way.”

And now, dear friends, you will think perhaps my last words have been many ; but ever as I thought the last one had been written, came some more I wished to say, and even yet I could say much more to you of my heart's longings for you. But it is time I put away my pen. And if I have helped one of you to look at your life from a right point of view ; if I have been able, God helping me, to give one of you ever such a little lift up ; if I have roused you only to *wish* to have juster, truer thoughts of God, of His dealings with you, and loving purposes for you ; if through my words one of the weary toilers has been cheered in his toil, or been led to give up the fruitless “toiling in rowing,” saying, “Master, we have toiled all the night,” and are no better off, and no further on, “nevertheless at thy word we will” willingly receive Thee ; and, the motive of toiling being exchanged, has proved the truth of the words, “Ye shall find rest for your souls,” even though the plaint is still heard, “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me :”—I shall indeed thank God, while I have to ask Him right humbly to pardon all the mistakes I have made.

Oh, that I could think, that of all those that I

now see "toiling in rowing, for the wind" is "contrary to them," that though their barks may be shattered by the storm, and they driven hopelessly from all human dependence, yet this will be true, "And so it came to pass that they *all* escaped safe to land."

"Lord, the waves are breaking o'er me and around,
Oft of coming tempests I hear the moaning sound,
Here there is no safety, rocks on either hand,
'Tis a foreign roadstead, a strange and hostile land.

Lord, the night is closing round my feeble bark—
How shall I encounter its watches long and dark?
Sorely worn and shattered by many a billow past,
Can I stand another rude and stormy blast?
Ah! the promised haven I never may attain,
Sinking and forgotten amid the lonely main,
Enemies around me, gloomy depths below,
Cut the cable, let me go!

"Hark the solemn answer! hark the promise sure!
Blessed are the servants who to the end endure?
Yet a little longer hope and tarry on,
Yet a little longer, weak and weary one!
More to perfect patience, to grow in faith and love,
More *my* strength and wisdom, and faithfulness to prove:
Then the sailing orders the Captain *shall* bestow—
Cut the cable, let thee go!"

And now, once more I beseech those of you who have not yet done so, to cry out "Think upon me, my God, for good. Be thou surety for thy servant for good." I see a crowd following Jesus "afar off;" but I want you to creep close to Him and say, "Lord, I will follow thee *whithersoever* thou goest;"

and, sitting down at His feet to learn His word, cry out of an earnest heart, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." There were hundreds in the crowd when the disciples said, "Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But Jesus knew that there was but one there, who, pressing close with a heart craving for a blessing, had touched him with the touch though but of trembling faith, and had gone away "satisfied with his goodness." And I want you to experience the truth, "As many as touched were made perfectly whole," and to be able to comfort yourselves with the word, "He shall speak peace unto his people."

And now, once more, I beseech those of you who have done so, to comfort yourselves and one another with these words, "The man (our kinsman, whose is the right of redemption) will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day," for God's own word is, "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Let Paul's confidence be yours, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Hold bravely on then, not counting yourselves to have apprehended, but "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," "looking unto Jesus," "press toward the mark for

the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

God grant that "in the day when he makes up his jewels," all our names may be found "written in the Lamb's book of life;" so that, "accepted in the Beloved," presented by Him "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy," "without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but perfect" through His own "comeliness which" He puts upon us, "and without blemish," we may be admitted to the heavenly city to "go no more out," but to be satisfied with the "fulness of joy" in the presence of God, at whose "right hand there are pleasures for evermore." How shall we then exclaim with the Queen of Sheba when she saw the glory of Solomon's kingdom, "It was a true report that I heard, but behold the half was not told me."

"Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty : they shall behold the land of far distance." "His rest shall be glorious."

"Soon and for ever, the work shall be done,
The warfare accomplished, the victory won,
Soon and for ever, the warrior lay down,
His sword for a harp, and his cross for a crown."

"Oh, give me, Lord, my golden harp,
And tune my broken voice,
That I may sing of troubles sharp,
Exchanged for endless joys."

"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that *endureth* to the end the same shall be saved. Blessed is he that waiteth."

Thus step by step, the feeble weary soul,
And the strong man triumphant, reach the goal ;
Trials there may be, must be, for each one,
But what will they be when the race is won ?
Patience must have her perfect work, but sure,
—Though hard the lesson,—He that shall endure
Unto the end, shall count it worth the pain,
The joy of such salvation to attain !
When the tired soul is wafted into rest
For ever on the loving Saviour's breast !

“The Lord be with you. The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.” “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

THE END.

